

# The Underground Struggle in Germany

By EVELYN LEND

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112 East 19th Street, New York City

# THE UNDERGROUND STRUGGLE IN GERMANY

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By EVELYN LEND

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## "NEWS FROM NOWHERE—"

EXCERPTS FROM UNDERGROUND REPORTS

Published by

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## FOREWORD

THIS pamphlet, dealing primarily with the underground opposition to Hitler's regime in Germany but also giving a valuable account of the defects and mistakes in the labor movement which led to Hitler's triumph, is of great value to all enemies of fascism.

It is valuable first of all because of the detailed and accurate social history of Germany which it presents. Here, in brief compass one may see the rise of Hitler and all the tragic mistakes of conservatives and radicals which contributed to his ultimate triumph. Its primary purpose is, however, to record the heroic struggle which is being made in a totalitarian state by the remnants of a once powerful labour movement. Whether this struggle, in which the ingenuity and bravery of a valiant minority partially atones for the mistakes of the past, will contribute to the ultimate destruction of fascism, only future history can tell. But when fascism is destroyed as ultimately it must be, one can not help but believe that the organizational and educational work, which is now carried on at so great a risk, is bound to make great contributions to the formation of a new society.

All this is important and interesting simply as history. It is good to know with what courage some men stand out against malignant power. But this pamphlet is of greater importance as a warning and guidepost for the labor forces in all parts of the world where democracy still exists, though everywhere threatened by fascistic tendencies. It warns us for

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one thing how terribly dangerous and fatal a division in the ranks of labor is, a warning which has achieved particular relevance in our own country with its unhappy rift in the organized labor movement. It warns us also against allowing fascism a foothold anywhere, under the mistaken hope that it will destroy itself. Fascism will undoubtedly destroy itself in the end; but not without taking whole civilizations to disaster in its destruction. Thus the mistakes of the labor forces before the advent of fascism are a warning, and the heroism of the underground movement after fascism's rise to power is an inspiring fact. We are warned and inspired. We are warned against mistakes which lead to such fatal consequences and inspired to carry forward the fight against fascism with a courage at least slightly commensurate with the courage of those who must contend against it after all the instruments of power and oppression are in its hands.

REINHOLD NIEBUHR

# The Underground Struggle in Germany

By EVELYN LEND

## I. The Background

WHEN Hitler formed his first coalition government in January, 1933, the whole world looked at Germany querying: What would the German opposition do? How would the German working class react? Would Socialists and Communists combine forces in the eleventh hour, call a general strike, rise against the newly-appointed "leader"?

None of these things happened. Blow after blow was dealt to the German labor movement, provoking no visible resistance. And when, after a few months, nothing seemed to be left of the once so proud and powerful German working class organizations, the collapse was generally accepted as one of the many events in world history after 1914 which were as tragic as they were incomprehensible.

If we measure the trends of general opinion by the yardstick of election figures, it is evident that the most rapid advancement of the Nazis took place in the period between 1928 and 1930. Previous to 1928 Hitler was generally regarded as an absurd and trouble-making agitator who, together with his followers, constituted a menace to the democratic Republic no greater than any gang of irresponsible criminals. In the general elections of May, 1928, the Nazis secured no more than 12 seats in Parliament as against 152 Social Democrats, 54 Communists, 78 Catholics, 45 Conservatives (*Deutsche Volkspartei*), 78 German Nationalists (Diehard Tories), and 25 Liberals. Compared with the previous elections (in 1924), the Nazis had actually lost two seats; all bourgeois parties lost heavily, the German Nationalists as many as 33 seats. The only clear winners in the 1928 elections were the so-called Marxist parties, the Socialists gaining 21 and the Communists gaining 9 seats.

Within the short period of rather more than two years which followed, the Nazis increased their influence so enormously that, in the next elections (September 1930) they gained as many as 107 seats in the Reichstag or six and a half million votes against the 800,000



votes which they got in 1928. The only other party to make headway in the 1930 elections were the Communists. They gained 1¼ million votes whereas the Socialists lost half a million. The Nazi gains were therefore not won at the expense of the working-class parties, but comprised such votes as had previously been cast for the Nationalist and Conservative parties plus about four million new votes cast by electors whom Hitler had attracted to the polls for the first time. What had happened in those two years that resulted in this unique rise of the Nazis?

To convey the full meaning of the collapse of German democracy one would need a detailed analysis of the character of the revolution in 1918 and the nature of the republic which emerged from it. This cannot be made here. Let me instead briefly recall those factors which had the most important bearing on the situation after 1928:

The Social Democrats forfeited the power which had been given into their hands by the breakdown of the imperial army and civil administration. Although a democratic constitution had been introduced, distinguished by its far-reaching social legislation, the strongholds of reaction were not even touched. The Prussian *Junkers* (landed aristocracy), the all-powerful capitalist trusts (especially in heavy industry), the personnel of the army and civil administration, the diplomatic corps, the judges and public prosecutors, all of them educated in the spirit of imperial pre-war Germany, continued to function unhampered by the young republic. The title of a book by Th. Plivier, dealing with the 1918 revolution, gives the essence of the situation in one short sentence: "The Kaiser went, the Generals remained."

Until the end of the year 1923 a number of attempts to overthrow the Weimar republic were made by the revolutionary Left as well as by the counter-revolutionary Right. They all failed, adding merely to the general chaos which resulted from the war, the devastating inflation, reparations, and the occupation of the Ruhr district.

In the years between 1924 and 1928 it seemed that stability and calm had returned at last. American capital was pouring into Germany, assisting the rapid reconstruction of Germany industry. In 1926 Germany was solemnly admitted to the League of Nations after having concluded the Locarno Treaty for peace and security with Great Britain, France, Belgium, and Italy in October, 1925. During

that period the standard of living was rising; unemployment was comparatively low; the trade unions were successful in raising wages; the—frequently Socialist—municipalities were actively engaged in an immense program for building decent working class flats. The war, the Versailles Treaty, the inflation were almost forgotten—Germany lived at peace with herself and with the world.

The consequence of this restoration of calm and prosperity was the same as it would be anywhere in the world—conservatism. If conservatism means being in favor of existing conditions and institutions, the truly conservative forces at that time in Germany were the Social Democrats who had been mainly responsible for the Weimar constitution and continued to be its principal advocates. Nowhere was this more clearly expressed than in a book written by the veteran Austro-German Socialist Karl Kautsky: "The political tasks of the proletarian parties have been radically transformed by the revolution (i.e. of 1918) and its consequences. . . . Our function is now to maintain the republic, i.e., the existing state, and not to overthrow it; in so far Social Democracy ceases to be revolutionary and becomes conservative. . . . Thus the idea of a political revolution *after* the political revolution becomes nonsensical." (Karl Kautsky: "Der Bolschewismus in der Sackgasse," 1930).

Hence the extraordinarily high vote which the Social Democrats gained in 1928 (nine millions). The Communists, too, made some gains attracting altogether 3½ million electors. At first sight the Communist success would appear to contradict the above statement of an essentially *conservative* victory, but during the period in question Communist policy was in fact not so fundamentally different from that of the Social Democrats. The "left" Communist leaders having been expelled, the party worked side by side with the Socialists in the free trade unions for the improvement of labor conditions. They never forsook their revolutionary aims; but somehow the goal of revolution seemed to have moved into the same far distance as the Socialist commonwealth of which Social Democrats still sometimes dreamed.

In the two years which followed the German situation was to change so radically in every respect that few were quick enough to grasp the full significance of the transformation.

The main factor responsible for the change was the deep economic slump into which the country was plunged after only four

short years of reconstruction and prosperity. Unemployment figures rose as fast as wages fell, and with the growing misery of the working class, and through the rapid decline of their purchasing power, hundreds of thousands of small shopkeepers, tradesmen, artisans, and peasants were ruined. The deepness of the slump would have been a catastrophe for any country. But in Germany, which since 1914 had known little but hardship and starvation, the crisis had a much deeper effect. There had been altogether too much misery; too long had the patience of the German people been tried; now it turned to desperation. They were looking for help, but to whom should they appeal? The old reactionary parties had brought upon them the misery of the war. Besides, their leaders were the same bosses who now threw the workers into the street or cut their wages ruthlessly. They could be counted out. The Social Democrats? But the Social Democrats seemed responsible for it all. In 1928 a coalition government had been formed under Social Democratic leadership. The Social Democrat Hermann Mueller-Franken was Prime Minister. The slump had started with the Socialists in office. Perhaps—many people thought—the slump was not directly due to them, but they had clearly been incapable of dealing with it.

The terrible crisis suddenly awakened radical feelings in the German people. Their radicalism was vague in its content. They did not know what they wanted or what could or should be done. They merely knew that everything ought to be *radically* different. The tide could have been turned then if only, at that late hour, Socialists and Communists had combined forces, determined to shift the burden of the slump from the shoulders of the poor on to the shoulders of the rich, unafraid of possible implications and consequences. But, as it turned out, the period of growing misery coincided with an increasingly intensified fraternal strife between the two working class parties.

In the same year of 1928 the Sixth World Congress of the Comintern met, and inaugurated its new policy which was to be followed by all the Communist parties of the world. Part of it was the theory of "Social-Fascism," i.e., that Social Democracy was the chief enemy of the working class; the tactics, which went with it, were the splitting of the free trade unions and the refusal to collaborate with other working class parties.

The intensity of the mutual hatred of Socialists and Communists

will hardly be conceivable to anyone who has not himself experienced this period. To both of them the enemy was not so much the rising Fascist movement, the *Junkers* or magnates of the Ruhr, as the rival labor organization, which was to be attacked on every occasion with the utmost ferocity. In the course of time more and more Socialist parties and organizations, varying in size and importance, were to join in the general competition for the support of the German workers. There was, to begin with, the ISK (German section of the Militant Socialist International) which was founded in 1926 after its members had been expelled from the Social Democrats. This organization fought particularly against the idea that Socialism must inevitably succeed capitalism. In theory as well as in practice its chief characteristic was the emphasis laid on moral integrity and education of character of the individual members. Endeavoring to combine disciplined action with freedom of criticism, they formed a centralized cadre-organization with a strict code of rules (e.g., teetotalism, severance of all connections with religious communities, etc.). Then there was the K.P.O. (Communist Party, Opposition) which broke away from the German C.P. after the Sixth World Congress of the Comintern. That break-away was due primarily to their disagreement with the new policy of the C.P., which demanded the formation of independent Communist trade unions and rendered co-operation with other working class parties impossible. There was later the S.A.P. (Socialist Workers' Party), in many respects the equivalent of the I.L.P., which had emerged partly from the Left wing of the Social Democrats and partly from the K.P.O. Apart from these, there arose numerous other small groups and organizations, too insignificant to be mentioned by name.

While the crisis grew worse, the radicalism of which I have spoken increased, and with it a general tension leading to frequent bitter clashes between political opponents which, as often as not, ended in armed battles. As an answer to the general tension, the Social Democratic Police President of Berlin, Herr Zorgiebel, prohibited all open air demonstrations for May Day, 1929. It was to be foreseen that the radical Berlin workers would not easily renounce their May Day demonstration for which they had fought in the past against the laws of Bismarck and the Kaiser. Despite the prohibition, many followed the call of the Communists and went out into the street. The



police force, controlled by the Social Democrats (and commanded by many reactionary officers of the old school), was sent out fully equipped with tanks, machine guns, and rifles, and with strict orders to enforce the law at any cost. The result was 25 workers killed, 36 heavily wounded, and numerous others slightly injured. This May Day has never been forgotten in Berlin. It was probably largely responsible for the gains which the Communists made in the general elections of 1930 at the expense of the Social Democrats.

The decisive swing-over, however, took place not within the camp of the organized working class, but within the very much larger section of the German people which had previously been more or less indifferent. This was the essentially passive element in politics which, lacking any definite aims or consistent policy of its own, moves invariably with the general tide, attracted always by the strongest force. A united and militant working-class would have attracted them. A working class, split into rival organizations each condemning and denouncing the other, was the embodiment of hopeless impotence.

Hence the sudden rise of the Hitler Party from practically nought to the second strongest party in the Reichstag. The Nazis were able to reap the harvest sown by the economic slump and the incapacity of labor to deal with it. The German people had reached such depths of misery that their hopes were replaced by fury: "Give us a scape-goat," they demanded, "give us those who are responsible, tell us who our enemy is so that we can take revenge." The Nazis were obliging. To the desperate people they gave the anonymous enemy: "The System." A more effective slogan has never been invented. "The System" of 1918 was everything that was evil and hateful. And the people swallowed the new catchword greedily. Bigger and bigger grew the audiences to whom Hitler threw the foe: "The System," embodying the slump, unemployment, and "interest-slavery," the dominance of the Jews, the dominance of Bolshevism, the dominance of finance capital, ruination of the small shopkeepers by department- and chain-stores, the heavy liabilities of landlords and peasants, the sinking profits of industry, and—above all—the country's national enslavement through the Versailles Treaty; in short, every grievance which anyone might conceivably have.

Hitler did not propose any specific cure to heal all the thousand wounds from which the German people was bleeding. He simply said:

"Give me the power, and I will do everything for you." It sounded incredible and still, what else was there to hope for. The Nazis had never failed as yet—because they had never been tried out. They seemed a strong and disciplined body with one central will, strikingly different from all the other parties, disunited in their own ranks through quarreling and strife.

Hitler gave Germany an enemy—"The System." He gave her also a cause—Nationalism. There can be no doubt as to the wrongs that Germany experienced from her conquerors in the immediate post-war period; it is equally true, however, that international readjustment was well on its way. The national indignation against the Ruhr occupation in 1923 had been a genuine feeling shared by the entire German people. But the jingoist frenzy whipped up by Nazi agitation after 1929 had little or nothing to do with the real German grievances. No German felt friendly towards the Versailles treaty, but neither was this treaty and its implications the subject of universal concern and hatred before the Nazis used it as their chief scape-goat. "The System" and the "Versailles Dictate" became much more symbols than tangible realities. The average German did not know exactly what the Versailles treaty was all about, he understood it just as little as the working of that devilish trinity that was alleged to rule over the country—Judaism, Bolshevism, and Finance capital, all in one person.

Yet lack of consistency and logic did not prevent the Nazis from winning millions of desperate souls. They won, in the course of time, their adherents from all classes of society. And in all classes their appeal was successful with precisely the same type of people. In the working class Hitler found his followers among the permanently unemployed, i.e., those workers who had already lost all reasonable hope of ever finding jobs in the normal course of economic development. They were the victims not so much of the recent slump (which had merely turned their despair into desperateness), as of industrial rationalization which had substituted machinery for human labor. Among the urban lower middle classes Hitler attracted all those millions of small traders, shop-keepers, and artisans who had been crowded out of their trades by the modern development of production and distribution. Among the peasants and big landowners the Nazi supporters were those most hopelessly in debt through the international agrarian crisis. Last, but not least, there was a large and important

section of the capitalist class which, right from the beginning, had cast in its lot with Hitler. Outstanding among them were the well-known leaders of German heavy industry who were on the very verge of bankruptcy.

In other words, the Fascist recruits comprised the bankrupt people of all classes, those who could no longer hope to help themselves, those who had been thrown out of their traditional position in society without a chance of regaining it. They could see but one way out—a strong state which would create work for the unemployed, subsidize industry and landed interests—do for them, in short, what they could not do themselves. Their man was Hitler, their party Fascism, setting out to merge the ideals of capitalism with those of feudalism, guaranteeing profits to industry, work to the workers, rent to the landlords, protective guilds to the craftsmen, power to the army, and glory to them all. Thus Hitler scored his amazing success in 1930, thus he overtook all other forces within the next three years, emerging then as the supreme ruler of Germany.

After the September elections in 1930 the slump grew even worse. The Socialists had been forced to resign previous to the elections. Bruening followed Hermann Mueller as Chancellor of the Reich. His rule by emergency decrees heralded the beginning of the end of the Weimar constitution. While enormous sums from public funds were given as credits to the estates of Hindenburg's friends, the East Prussian *Junkers*, wages and unemployment benefits were ruthlessly cut; new general taxes were introduced, imposing an equal burden on rich and poor, in short, a redistribution of the shrinking wealth in favor of the possessing classes.

Still, the Social Democrats tolerated Bruening and his policy of emergency decrees, holding that—bad as Bruening was—he was the lesser evil compared with what might come after him. The Communists attacked the Social Democrats violently because of their theory of the lesser evil and their unpopular toleration policy, arguing that starvation under Bruening was no better than starvation under Hitler. While this criticism was regarded with much sympathy by a large section of the Socialist and trade union rank and file membership, the Communist policy of calling practically all non-Communists fascist was vehemently rejected. In the eyes of the C.P. the Bruening Gov-

ernment was "Fascist," the Social Democratic Party was "Fascist," why should they be afraid of Hitler? As a matter of fact, they even regarded a Hitler victory as a vehicle of hastening the revolution. In a parliamentary speech, on October 14, 1931, Remmele (then one of the leaders of the German C.P. second only to Thaelmann) said: "Herr Bruening has expressed it very clearly: once they (i.e. the Fascists) are in power, then the united front of the proletariat will emerge and it will make a clean sweep of everything. . . . We are not afraid of the Fascists. They will shoot their bolt sooner than any other Government." That was the Communist line of thought right up to 1932. "Let the Nazis come, they will provoke the revolution."

In their blindness to the real development they not only considered the Fascist dictatorship a better means than democracy of serving their own ends, but they even strengthened the jingoist appeal of the Nazis by launching suddenly a program of "National and Social Liberation," by denouncing the Nazis for waging a mere sham-fight against the "Versailles Slavery," whereas they, the Communists, were the true defenders of national freedom, and by participating actively in a Nazi referendum against the Social Democratic government of Prussia in August, 1931.

By the beginning of the year 1932 they changed their line. The Nazi menace had become too threatening. The hopes for a revolutionary opportunity as a consequence of a Nazi victory had become too obviously absurd. The C.P. launched another campaign under the slogan: "Fight Fascism Now." But nobody seemed to know exactly where and what Fascism was. Both the Socialists and the Bruening Government had been denounced as Fascists. Yet Bruening had to make room for the more Fascist von Papen government. And when von Papen dismissed the Social Democratic government of Prussia, the Communists made suddenly a united front proposal to the Social Democrats and trade unions. They suggested a general strike against von Papen's *coup d'état* in Prussia and in defence of the same Braun-Severing government which they had tried to overthrow only eleven months ago by supporting the Nazi referendum. The general strike did not come off for two reasons of equal importance. On the one hand the Communist united front proposals were too sudden to be taken seriously anywhere. On the other hand the Socialists had grown so accustomed to tolerating every blow as part of the lesser evil that



they refused to take action when Prussia, their last governmental stronghold, was taken from them.

Papen's *coup* in Prussia took place on July 20, 1932. A few days later, on July 31, there were again general elections. This time Hitler gained 230 seats out of a total of 607. The Social Democrats had 133, the Communists 89 seats. The newly elected Reichstag was dissolved at its first meeting. Another election followed in November. This time the Nazis suffered a serious set-back, losing two million votes which were, for the last time, re-captured by the German Nationalists. The Social Democratic vote fell further, the Communists gained what they lost. Hitler's losses were generally regarded as the beginning of his definite decline. In reality, he had forfeited merely temporarily the support of some middle class sections, which had become frightened by the radical language of the Nazis and their active participation in the Berlin transport workers' strike, called by the Communists on the eve of the elections. The trade unions refused to sanction the strike and pay relief. But in spite of its unofficial character it was at first very successful and paralyzed Berlin's transportation completely. The response of the transport workers was very vigorous; practically all of them came out and they found widespread sympathy among the Berlin population. But, unaided as it was by the trade unions, the strike was bound to break down. The trade union bureaucracy refused to sanction the strike, and it took a very strange development. Street collections were taken for the strike funds, and I shall always remember the sight of a Communist and a Nazi standing arm in arm and shouting in an agreed rhythm, while they were shaking their collection boxes: "For the strike funds of the R.G.O. (Revolutionary Trade Union Opposition)"—"For the strike funds of the N.S.B.O. (Nazi Factory Cell Organization)." The sight of this perverted united front, observed in various districts of Berlin, was so repulsive to most Socialists that they lost all the sympathy for the strike they previously had.

After the November elections Hitler was asked to join the Papen cabinet. He refused, demanding either complete power or nothing. As von Papen was unable to obtain a parliamentary majority, he was followed by General von Schleicher who, on December 2, accepted the task of forming the new government. The following months of December and January were one long chain of manoeuvres and intrigues

between Papen, Hitler, the Hindenburg clique and Hugenberg (the leader of the German Nationalists and boss of the powerful *Scherl* newspaper concern), in order to undermine Schleicher's position. On January 28, 1933, Schleicher resigned. On January 30, Hindenburg finally yielded to the Nazi terms.

Adolf Hitler was appointed Chancellor of the Reich.

## 2. Breakdown of the Labor Movement

(January, 1933—Autumn, 1933)

THE first phase of Fascist rule over Germany is essentially the period of piecemeal destruction as well as of the break-down of the traditional working-class movement. This phase began with the advent to power of Hitler's so-called National Coalition—the government was at first not exclusively Nazi—in January, 1933, and lasted to the plebiscite in November of the same year. Let me briefly recall the main facts.

Obvious as it is now that January 30, 1933, was the first day of totalitarian Nazi rule over Germany, it is important to remember that then the labor movement in no way comprehended what was really happening. Although persecution of labor officials and members started immediately on a big scale, few appreciated that it was the beginning of the end.

Two facts above all accounted for this strange lack of apprehension:

(1) The intense civil war atmosphere that had preceded the Hitler government. Terror was in no way an altogether new phenomenon. Armed raids of Nazi formations on political meetings of opponents or on workers' settlements had become almost a daily feature during the years of the big slump. Every Sunday night, when the first editions of the Monday papers were sold in the streets of Berlin, the first thing one used to do was to turn almost mechanically to the account of the deaths which had occurred during the week-end as a result of Nazi assaults on political opponents. One grew accustomed to read of an average of half a dozen per week in many districts, much as one read of road accidents. Of course, once Hitler had become Chancellor the terror increased immediately on an enormous scale. How-

ever, it *increased* and was not an altogether new and hitherto unknown thing, and therefore appeared at first to be a mere change in quantity.

(2) The second important factor was that Hitler came to power with a *coalition* government apparently of a similar type to those Germany had known in the past. The preceding coalition governments of Bruening, Papen, and Schleicher had already been so reactionary and had to such a large extent based their reign on emergency decrees and unconstitutional procedure that the fundamental novelty of the Nazi government was at first hardly visible. If, in addition, one bears in mind that the previous governments had been denounced—particularly though not exclusively by the Communist propaganda—as genuine *Fascist* governments, the lack of appreciation becomes more comprehensible.

On February 1 Parliament was dissolved. The same day Goering issued a decree against Communist propaganda. On February 4 the President of the Reich, Hindenburg, issued an emergency decree "For the protection of the German people" which was directed against all anti-Nazi forces. On Feb. 7 Goering appointed National Socialist officials to the Ministry of Interior. On Feb. 9 all police officers, who did not wholeheartedly support Hitler, were asked to resign from their posts. On Feb. 13 all republican civil servants in high positions were dismissed. On Feb. 15 Nazis were appointed as police officers in place of such republicans as had been forced to resign. On Feb. 17 the terror was officially sanctioned by an order to the police force to use their firearms against the population.

In the meantime, almost the entire Communist and Socialist press had been suppressed, some papers for good, some for three months, others only for days. After such a period they were again allowed to appear for a couple of days in order to be suppressed anew. Thus the labor movement was robbed of all its propaganda means for the forthcoming elections on March 5. Apart from their press most of their literature and their meetings were banned.

Still, the continuity of the *rule of law* was seriously doubted by nobody. That was particularly true of the Social Democrats. I well remember the last meeting which the Socialists were allowed to hold in the Berlin *Lustgarten*. At that meeting Otto Wels, Chairman of the Social Democratic Party, characterized the situation by the com-

forting proverb: "Strict masters do not rule for a long time." Even the large-scale Nazi provocation of February 27, the burning of the Reichstag, did not succeed in completely destroying the stubborn wishful belief that after a while things would return to their normal course.

Whilst this was the average view of the Socialists and trade unionists, the Communists were in no way more realistic. The two wings of the movement differed only in that the Socialists held that things could not really develop as badly as some isolated pessimists predicted, whereas the Communists acted as if things had already become so bad (under the previous governments) that it was logically impossible for them to become worse.

The first terror wave was particularly, though not exclusively, directed against the Communists. The Communist Party was prohibited on the day of the Reichstag fire (which gave the excuse). During the next few days thousands, if not tens of thousands of their parliamentary deputies, party officers, and active members were thrown into the prisons or murdered. In the course of the next few months, the Socialists were to experience exactly the same fate. But they were given a short space of time, during which their party organization was allowed to continue a sham legal existence only hampered by some "trifling" restrictions; for example, their press was prohibited, their meetings were dissolved or raided, their election posters torn from the walls, their party and trade union offices ransacked.

The general elections of March 5, in spite of the previous wave of terror against all organizations on the left, still gave as many as 120 parliamentary seats to Socialists and 81 to the Communists (against 288 Nazis, 73 Catholic-Centre, and 52 Nationalists). The Communist votes being cancelled, the Nazis could claim an absolute majority.

Even the eventful month of February, 1933, was not impressive enough to open the eyes of the German workers, who watched and suffered their terrible fate in a horrified bewilderment that was more paralyzing than calling for action. They were just waiting. Waiting to awake from a bad dream or waiting for a lead for action which never came, neither from the Socialists, nor from the Communists. The Socialists went on proclaiming that "we must wage our strug-



gle on the basis of the constitution" (which for all practical purposes had been abolished long since); and they emphasized that "undisciplined procedure by individual organizations or groups on their own initiative would do the greatest harm to the entire working class" (from the Manifesto, issued by the Executive and Parliamentary Party of the Social Democrats. *Vorwaerts*, January 31, 1933.) That call for discipline remained their only message to the workers, who awaited a call for action. Previously, the same *Vorwaerts* had spoken of "fierce resistance," but that resistance was only remembered when it was too late.

The Communists had used even stronger language, but the show they gave was as poor. Later they argued that the betrayal of the Social Democrats had rendered any action impossible. With themselves, they were quite satisfied; apparently the lack of resistance did not mean anything, as "the force of the C.P. expressed itself in the fact that, in the critical moment, the party remained homogeneous. During the critical weeks, there were no discussions going on in the German C.P." (*The Communist International*, German edition, No. 10; July 7, 1933.)

As a result of such a situation, the political and organizational life of the working class was more and more subject either to sudden or to gradual disruption. By the early days of spring, contacts between the Central Executives of both the Communist and the Social Democratic Party with the local and district organizations had broken off. The rank and file members in vain sought guidance from their former leaders. All they got, was either examples of retreat or else phrases that had no bearing on the situation.

Deceived by the fact that the Nazis advanced only step by step and did not destroy all democratic institutions at one blow (although achieving in a few months the same results for which the Italians had needed as many years), the Social Democrats believed up to the very last minute that they might be able to save their party from illegality. Consequently, they concentrated all their energies on that one goal: to preserve the party and its legal status at all costs. They went very far to achieve this end, as the following examples show. The Socialist and liberal press of other countries had published full accounts of the atrocities committed by the German Fascists. During the last days of March, several members of the Socialist Party Executive

were sent abroad in order to stop these reports which "were apt to harm the position of anti-Fascists in Germany" who had been held responsible by the Nazis for furnishing the details. On March 30, Otto Wels, chairman of the Social Democratic Party, demonstratively resigned from the Bureau of the Second International. Wels later explanation that this resignation was but a tactical move and that he had never really contemplated giving up his and his party's international affiliation is very likely correct. However, the attempts of the Social Democratic Party to adapt themselves, if only outwardly, to the new German spirit of narrow nationalism, certainly played into the hands of the Nazis. The demonstrative abandonment of working class internationalism added considerably to the already existing demoralization.

Nothing, neither concession nor compromise, could save the labor organizations from their fate. Bit by bit, their legal existence was destroyed. The worst attempt at a voluntary self-adaptation to the regime was made by the A.D.G.B. (the German central labor federation), which went as far as to support warmly the Fascist May Day celebrations. The *Gewerkschaftszeitung*, the official organ of the A.D.G.B. published for May an article by Walter Pahl of which one paragraph reads: "We certainly need not strike our colors in order to recognize that the victory of National Socialism, though won in the struggle against a party which we used to consider as the embodiment of the idea of Socialism (i.e. the Social Democrats), *is our victory as well*; because, today, the Socialist task is put to the whole nation." (My italics.) This declaration, which roused much indignation among the rank and file of the trade union and Socialist movement, failed to impress the Nazis in the least. On May 2, a few days after that surrender, all trade union buildings were occupied by the S. A. (Storm troopers) and S.S. (Blackshirts). The most prominent trade union leaders were arrested (Leipart, Grassmann and Wissel). On May 13, all trade union property was confiscated. The German working class had lost its industrial organizations. The only union to escape the enforced *Gleichschaltung*, (incorporation into the new system) was the *AFA-Bund* (Employees' Union, embracing clerks, shop assistants and other categories of white collar workers), which dissolved itself voluntarily in order to spare its members the shameful subjection.

In the meantime, the Social Democrats split into several groups. A part of the Executive emigrated to Prague and continued from there their activities. The largest section of the Parliamentary Party led by Paul Loebe (President of the German Reichstag), went further and further in their concessions in order to buy from Hitler the toleration of the party.

A third part, finally, worked clandestinely. Of them I shall speak later.

On May 17, Hitler made in the Reichstag one of his famous speeches on the question of foreign policy. That was the last Parliamentary session in which the Socialists were to participate. The last act they performed as a legal political party was to support the Nazi resolution on foreign policy which was thus unanimously accepted. That surrender helped them, however, as little as submission had been able to save the trade unions. On June 23, the Social Democratic Party was officially prohibited; the leader of the concession policy, Paul Loebe, was arrested together with many others. The Nazi régime had tolerated Loebe's line of compromise exactly as long as they considered it useful for their own ends, that is to say, until the confusion of the working masses was carried so far that the last spark of self-confidence was suffocated.

On July 14, this development found its temporary end by the "Bill Against The New Formation Of Parties," which declared the Nazis the only legal political party in Germany.

Thus, in less than four months the powerful German labor movement organized and trained for many years, educated by Marx and Engels, proud of its traditions and achievements, that movement burst like a huge toy balloon pricked by a needle. The totalitarian state was established. The working class movement had vanished from the surface. Socialists in other countries may have pitied their unhappy German comrades. But, in their eyes, the German movement was finished, and, as many felt, largely through its own fault.

The disappointment can nowhere have been greater than among the German workers themselves. They understood as little as their friends abroad. They despised themselves and their defeated organization as much as only their worst enemies could. Worst of all, even then the responsible parties did not try to understand what had hap-

pened and to seek new ways which might assist in the reorganization of the beaten labor army. They refused to realize what had happened and buried their heads in the sand in the ostrich manner.

At the time of the worst defeat when everybody was wondering: How could this have happened, what was responsible, what are we to do now? the Communists continued their old methods of self-deception which had been largely responsible for the breakdown: "Everything points to this: that in the very near future violent class struggles must be expected . . . Will the Party (i.e., the C.P.) be able to give a sufficient lead to the *present revolutionary movement of the masses?*" They go on to speak of "the expression of the increasing revolutionary activities of the masses," etc., etc. ("A few remarks on the illegal activities of the C.P.G." *The Communist International*, German Edition, No. 14, September 1, 1933.) At the same time the Communists continued to direct their main attacks against the Socialists. It is true, the exit of the Social Democratic Party and the trade unions was bad enough. However, the attempts at making themselves acceptable to the Nazis was mainly the work of a few, though prominent, individuals. The Communists must have known that as well as anybody else. That did not prevent them from claiming that "the complete elimination of the Social Fascists (i.e., the Social Democrats) from the state apparatus, the brutal suppression of the Social Democratic organization and its press as well does not alter the fact that they (i.e., the suppressed party and its no longer existing press) represent now as before the main social buttress of the dictatorship of capital." (Fritz Heckert, member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Germany: "About the fight of the Communist Party in Germany." *Rundschau*, No. 23; July 7, 1933).

The Socialists were just as eager to attribute all the responsibility for the defeat to the Communists: "The fact remains that Communism has been one long crime and a terrible fate for the German working class. Communism paralyzes the parliamentary influence of the labor movement . . . thus Social Democracy was defeated and with it the Republic and the working class was defeated by the assailing counter-revolutionary forces. . . ." ("Break the Chains," *Neuer Vorwaerts*, Prague, No. 1; June 18, 1933.)



Let me once more shortly recall the main facts which at that time impressed themselves most on everybody's mind:

(1) Big promises about "the determination to offer fierce resistance," made before Hitler came to power, had turned out to be so many hollow words and phrases.

(2) All better known working class leaders—with hardly any exception—had disappeared in one way or other. Together with them disappeared their offices, their funds, their press, in other words, all those functions, activities, and material holdings which transforms a group of people into an organization.

(3) The trade unions and a certain part of the Parliamentary Socialist Party had, up to the last moment, tried to sell themselves to Hitler—and even failed to save themselves.

(4) The Communists blinded themselves to reality, maintaining that the defeat was actually a revolutionary advance, and that the Socialists continued to be the chief and most dangerous enemies.

At the same time Hitler spoke golden words. He had asked for four years in which to overcome economic misery, abolish unemployment and restore "German honor." Had he not been right when he scorned the working class parties? Had they not really and shamefully failed? Perhaps he was more right than one had thought—perhaps also in other respects. . . . Should one not give him the fair chance he was asking for? Such were the thoughts that filled the minds of the overwhelming majority of the German people by Autumn, 1933.

The result was the November elections and referendum which came as a shock to all anti-Fascists. Of the electorate of 45,146,277, 95.2% voted in the Reichstag-elections and 96.3% in the referendum. In the elections the Nazis received 39,646,273 votes (92.2% of the electorate). 3,349,445 election cards were rendered invalid (7.8%). In the referendum 43,460,529 votes were cast, among them 750,282 invalid votes. Of the remaining one 40,609,243 votes were cast for the Nazis and 2,101,004 votes against them. In addition to those who showed enough stamina to refuse Hitler their support, there were certainly a great number who—but for the terror—would have either voted "NO" or else made their election cards invalid.

The German Social Democratic press in Prague celebrated the election results almost like a triumph: ". . . these four millions are

not an 'opposition' in the normal sense of the word; they are an army, hostile to the system, a nucleus battalion for the coming Socialist revolution." ("Four Million German Revolutionaries," *Neuer Vorwärtts*, November 19, 1933.)

The Communist Party went even further: "*The election result . . . represents a great victory of Thaelmann's Party. . . . This army of millions of brave anti-Fascists confirms the correctness of the statement, made already in October by the Central Committee of the German Communist Party, that a new revolutionary upsurge has begun in Germany.*" ("The Meaning of the Elections of November 12 in Germany"; *Rundschau*, No. 43; November 17, 1933. Italics in the original.)

In actual fact the time of the November plebiscite was the final demonstration of the decay and destruction of the old German movement. In that month of November, Hitler could dare, for the first time, to address German workers inside big factories. For example, the speech which he made in the *Siemens Works* (Berlin) was received with stormy applause.

That this kind of Fascist victory was not to last for a very long time, I shall endeavor to show later. At that time, however, there was reason for anything but celebration among the anti-Fascists. To the people in Germany the fact that the "NO" votes were only 4.9% of all votes cast was by no means as impressive as the fact that 95% of all electors had voted "YES" (not counting the 750,000 invalid votes). They certainly knew the election terror better than anybody else, but they also knew from their own experience that the terror as such accounted only for a certain proportion of the "YES" votes.

### 3. First Clandestine Organizations

THE development described in the previous chapter is, however, only one side of the picture.

While the official parties were visibly breaking down, there remained still thousands and thousands of their former membership who not only did not give up their beliefs but were ready and determined to carry on the struggle in spite of the dangers involved.

Yet, what were they to do? They lacked all experience, all preparation for the new kind of work. They were faced with a completely

new political phenomenon which they failed to understand. They did not even see how radical were the changes that had taken place. How could they work without those organizations which had been their only force, their only weapon? Who was to guide them after their old leaders had disappeared and so obviously failed?

They knew no better than to continue their former activities as well as they could. The methods and activities were to some degree different according to the varying political background of these first underground workers. But they had still many things in common although they developed independently of each other.

Common to most of them was the concentration of their activities almost exclusively on what may be called mass-propaganda. That is to say, they all chalked anti-Fascist slogans on the pavements and on the walls; they all printed or duplicated newspapers, periodicals, broadsheets, and leaflets which they distributed as widely as ever possible. Even the contents of such literature was, on the whole, rather uniform.

To all of them it was obvious that the Hitler government was a catastrophe for Germany. And against it they did what they had done in the democratic past; they tried to enlighten the people and to unmask the Nazis. That was the essence of their propaganda. They held firm to the idea that they need only persistently continue these activities in order to open the eyes of the German people who would then break the spell and chase the Nazis away.

Yet, unfortunately, the eyes of the German people were not so easily opened as these first propagandists seemed to believe. Also these initial activities were very largely based on illusions, with the consequence that after the November elections the disappointment reached even the nuclei of the illegal workers. The *Rote Stosstrupp* (one of the numerous illegal Socialist groups which were formed after Hitler had taken over) wrote immediately after the November elections: "The election result has called forth uncertainty and discouragement here and there among our comrades! We no longer fight against a party, but against the whole people; they say. To some this fight seems hopeless and they would rather avoid the sacrifices which it implies." ("Hitler 'wins'—what next?"; *Der Rote Stosstrupp*, No. 27, Nov. 18, 1933.)

The disappointment among the ranks of the *Rote Stosstrupp* was

by no means unique. All organizations had similar experiences, for the elections were bound to shock those who had based their hopes on illusions.

These illusions expressed themselves not only in the contents of their writings but just as much in their methods of work. For a certain period, there was much talk in the international press of mysterious "groups of five" which the Communists more than the rest had organized to cheat the *Gestapo*. The grain of realism in those reports was the simple fact that under Fascism mass meetings cannot be held, and that the gathering of even a dozen people may arouse the suspicions of the police. Any illegal meetings can therefore take place only in private houses or flats and should be attended by as few people as possible. That was the practice of conspirators throughout the ages, a practice which the German workers were forced to imitate after they had been reduced to the status of conspirators.

The Communist Party had actually reorganized itself into such groups of five or ten even before Hitler came to power. Unfortunately that re-organization had been so much advertised and a great part of the actual membership was so well known—to enemies as well as to friends—that these much talked-of units proved to be quite incompetent organizational attempts. They could not even have successfully withstood a much less cleverly and ruthlessly organized police force than the German *Gestapo* turned out to be.

The fierce determination of tens of thousands of Communists to defy all danger and to carry on at all costs should certainly not be underrated. The heroism displayed by many of them will not easily find its equal. But by their gross self-delusion, which mistook the actual defeat for a "revolutionary upsurge," they were driven to such inadequate activities that during that first period they destroyed more than they built up.

I remember particularly vividly one incident in the first days of July, 1933: I happened to meet in the streets of Berlin a friend of mine who was a member of the C.P. We talked for a while and I asked him what he was doing these days, whereupon I received the surprising answer: "I am just going to sell literature" (meaning party literature).—"What do you mean, *selling literature*? You don't want to tell me that you go around to strange people offering



them Communist pamphlets for sale?"—"That is exactly what I do want to tell you." And he showed me his briefcase, which contained about a dozen copies of a pamphlet entitled, "Thaelmann's Thirteen Questions to the Social Democratic Workers" which had been published long before Hitler and which, even from a Communist point of view, was somewhat obsolete and without any meaning in the fifth month of Fascist rule. I tried—without success—to convince him of the dangers of his undertaking which, to my mind, were completely out of proportion to the possible effects he might hope to achieve. A fortnight later I heard he had been arrested by the secret police. Of his further fate I know nothing.

This incident was typical of the attitude of thousands. The most active and most courageous among them were the first victims. One set of illegal workers after another disappeared in the cellars of the increasingly efficient *Gestapo*. Each time there remained enough to replace them. But still, the third, fifth, tenth, umpteenth group that took over was noticeably less qualified than the previous ones had been.

The Social Democratic Party developed on somewhat different lines. It lacked that revolutionary background of the Communists just as much as their tradition of extra-parliamentary activities. The immediate post-war experiences were too much in the past. In that respect they were in a much more difficult position than the Communists to cope with the new tasks. Moreover, once the skeleton of their organization had disappeared, the democratic structure of the party caused it to dissolve itself into a number of rather independent groups much more rapidly than the Communist Party which had always been a strictly centralized body.

After the Social Democratic Executive had obviously failed to organize resistance, these independent groups formed themselves very quickly all over Germany. It is not by accident that these first attempts were made chiefly by the younger generation. The groups often developed out of no more than a circle of former friends, who had in many cases belonged to one or other of the oppositional wings of the party. Common to them all was an unbroken energy due to their youth, which exempted them from the heavy responsibility for the past and made it psychologically much easier for them to throw off the effects of the general shock and depression.

Many of these first attempts at organization remained purely local and anonymous, without affecting anything but their immediate surroundings. But even this might have a great effect on the future, provided that they managed to escape the *Gestapo*. Others attempted to create proper organizations with branches in many districts. Among these were the *Rote Stosstrupp*, mentioned above, the *Proletarischer Pressedienst* and others.

This does not mean, however, that the elder generation had gone over to Hitler. Yet, during that first period, most of them had lost all self-confidence and all hope that anything could be done or was worth a trial. Nevertheless, many of them maintained their former contacts. At night, they used to gather at the old meeting places, in their beer-gardens or cafés. They had nothing to do with underground work. They could be seen by all and everybody whispering together, exchanging recollections of better times, telling each other of the horrible fate of this or that comrade, reporting on recent wage cuts or on the latest police raids in their street. They were glad to keep these contacts, in fact these were their only consolation. They were even happy, now and then, to get hold of an illegal leaflet which expressed what they felt themselves, or to see the words "Down with Fascism" chalked on a wall. But they did not go further and did not want to, at least not at that time.

Slowly and only half-consciously some of them have since made their peace with Hitler. Others became again active for the cause of Socialism at a later period. However, at that first period they formed by their passiveness the army of those millions which enabled Hitler to proclaim to the world the support of the entire German people.

A special importance, also during that first period, was gained by some small organizations which stood traditionally between the Socialists and the Communists, the S.A.P., the I.S.K., and the K.P.O. These organizations benefited from the fact that, in the past, they had stood less in the foreground of the political battle than the mass organizations. As a result their membership was less known to the police. Perhaps even more significant was the fact that, thanks to the relatively small part they had previously played in politics, they were not held responsible and did not hold themselves responsible for the break-down of the movement to the same extent as the mass organizations. That was their great moral asset. Thirdly, they had not

developed the wide gap between a powerful central bureaucracy and a more or less passively following rank and file membership that distinguishes most mass organizations in normal times. Holding them together were strictly dogmatic, principles which, in those times of general disruption proved firm bonds. In fact, they had all the assets and all the shortcomings of a political sect. This lent them a special significance, at a time when the mass movements had been so decimated that they, too, were numerically reduced to sects, without having the advantage of possessing a corresponding tradition.

It did not always remain thus. These organizations were later on to suffer just as much as the rest. They merely escaped very largely the first terror waves which were directed in the first place against the former working class leaders, officers, and better known members. Once the police set out to hunt down the illegal groups, all shared the same fate.

Most of these first attempts at organizing illegal work failed in all but one respect: they provided the German movement with legions of heroic martyrs who will never be forgotten. Whether Communists or Socialists, these first underground workers, with only few exceptions, were rounded up by the police, man by man. Thousands were murdered by Hitler's henchmen; the majority are still suffering in the prisons and concentration camps which are constantly overcrowded. Some managed to escape abroad and most of these have ever since been chased from one country to another. Many of these are fighting today in the International Brigades in Republican Spain, continuing there the struggle against Fascist oppression which they could not complete in their own country.

There remains to be mentioned one Social Democratic organization which, from the beginning, developed on different lines. From the title of its first pamphlet published in 1933\*, it got the name *Neu beginnen* (New Start). From the outset this organization differed from most of the other working class organizations in so far as it emphasized the following (and directed its practical work accordingly ever since):

(1) That the Hitler government was not merely one of the many ultra-reactionary governments which would disappear as quickly as

\* *Socialism's New Beginning*; published in U.S.A. by League for Industrial Democracy '34. 25c.

it came, but that Fascism meant a fundamental transformation within the capitalist society, which for a long time to come would render the chances of Socialism exceedingly small.

(2) That one of the most important differences between Fascism and other reactionary regimes was the fact that the former was carried to power by a broad mass movement recruiting its members from all sections of society.

(3) That as long as the stability of the Fascist regime was guaranteed by a genuine mass support, anti-Fascist mass propaganda (as carried out by the other groups) would only demand senseless sacrifices without achieving any visible results, (propaganda being incapable of changing the feelings, and only capable of making conscious already existing feelings and guiding them in a definite direction).

(4) That the essential task was to build up a strong and firm organization composed of experienced "functionaries" (*Funktionaere*), well-trained theoretically as well as practically, with contacts in the important workshops and possibly in other sections of society.

(5) That the task of such an organization was essentially that of active preparation for times of general crises when the newly awakened spontaneous mass opposition could and should be co-ordinated and guided.

(6) That for the eventual victory the re-unification of the hostile working class sections was an essential prerequisite. Although unity had meanwhile become the foremost slogan of most of the clandestine organizations, it was essential to do the first practical steps immediately by co-ordinating all militant forces within the framework of a revived Social Democracy. Despite all its failures in the past, millions of German workers continued and would continue to preserve their emotional loyalty to this party, which they had helped to build and which in their eyes constitutes the embodiment of working class tradition. Besides, the democratic structure of the Social Democratic Party (as different from the C.P.) would ensure the possibility of a free development of new and progressive ideas.

(7) That continuity of organized work was of an utmost importance in order to preserve the tradition and experiences of the working class movement, which, left to themselves, were bound to fade



away; and that therefore an illegal technique had to be consciously developed to cope with the extremely thorough and methodical procedure of the enemy.

Some of these ideas have since become common property of most groups doing clandestine political work in Germany. At that first time, however, they differed vastly from what was generally accepted.

#### 4. Development of Underground Work

##### (I)

*Autumn, 1933, till June, 1934*

TO WRITE the history of illegal activity from those first weeks and months until today is not an easy task. After five years the development as a whole appears as a painfully slow process of adaptation to the new reality, in which all previous experiences were of no help whatsoever. What did exist were certain romantic ideas taken from an imperfect knowledge of previous illegal periods, such as the Socialist movement in Tzarist Russia, the German movement under Bismarck's anti-Socialist laws, and the experiences of the international working class movement during the great war. There was hardly any knowledge and understanding of the experiences of the clandestine struggle in the classical country of Fascism, Italy. The German anti-Fascist struggle has therefore (and for other reasons which will be mentioned later) been anything but a clear-cut development, and a chart of its trends would show as many ups and downs as a weather curve.

These ups and downs were never accidental. They have been closely bound up with the frequently changing mass feelings towards the regime which in turn varied with the failure or success of the Nazi Government. A greater independence and some degree of continuity was achieved by the underground movement only after it had passed through years of hard apprenticeship. In other words, those numerically small cadre organizations, which survived after countless waves of persecution, developed a new spirit of self-reliance foreign to the shattered remnants of the democratic era. However, the description of that phase must wait for a later chapter.

The Third Reich started its first winter with the triumph of the November plebiscite. But this triumph was not to last very long. Economic depression had not been overcome. On the contrary, the first effects of an unexperienced administration and the more or less foolish attempts at overcoming the inherent difficulties by a series of hopeless decrees woke the people slowly from their stupefaction and aroused a widespread and ever growing discontent.

The criticism started first in the middle and upper classes, the working class joining in only at a later stage. Symptoms of the unrest during the first winter and early spring of 1933-34 were: (1) the sharp outbreak of the church conflict; (2) the friction between the army general staff and the Nazi leadership (dismissal of General Hammerstein); (3) awakening opposition among responsible capitalists (secret meeting in Amsterdam of leading German industrialists and financiers in December, 1933); (4) fresh activities of conservative and monarchist groups, who seemed to discover anew their claim to rule; (5) difficulties in coping with the Storm Troopers, a civil war army, which had developed into a dangerously dissatisfied mob without any function once Fascism had secured its victory.

The recovery of the working class from its defeat took much longer, since they had lost more ground than anybody else. Still, by the spring of 1934 a revival of labor criticism and of the illegal movement was quite distinct. From that time onwards not only the numerically small groups which had remained active, but also the skilled workers in the shops who used to form the nucleus of the free trade union movement slowly awoke to an ever-growing criticism of the regime.

This revival was due to several factors: (a) In spite of all promises unemployment had increased. (b) By spring 1934 real wages had already dropped by 21.5% (compared with January 30, 1933). (c) In January, 1934, the "Bill for the Regulation of National Labor" was introduced, the legal expression of the already achieved enslavement of the German workers. The chief item of that bill was the introduction of the so-called "leader principle" into the workshops, by which the employer was appointed as "leader" and the workers as "followers." (d) It was finally a political event in another country which, almost more than the economic hardship, roused the feelings

of the German workers. That was the February rising of the Austrian Socialists against the Dollfuss *coup d'état*.

The February fights were watched with strongest excitement everywhere in Germany. For days we used every free minute to listen into the wireless and to search for news in the usually mistrusted German press. A number of workers scratched their last pennies together and tried to reach the Austrian frontier to join in the fight. Everything was over when they arrived.

It need not be emphasized how great was the disappointment over the defeat. But even greater was the satisfaction that the Austrian workers had at least actively defended themselves and had lost only after a heroic struggle. The bloodshed in Vienna meant for many Germans the restoration of their faith in the cause of Socialism. "Thus," they told themselves, "the defeat of the German movement was, after all, not typical. It is not true that all Socialists are cowards. Socialists can fight, too; workers can fight, too. . . ." Vienna proved it to them, and their self-confidence grew.

The growing resentment in all classes of the German people, which eventually led to the ill-famed 30th of June, 1934, did not yet find any immediate or adequate expression in the clandestine work. This still remained miles behind the spontaneous development.

But better than any descriptive account which I could give, do the following impressions illustrate the state of the movement at that particular period. They are taken from a report (written in Germany just before the Vienna events) by an exceedingly well-informed person who not only enjoyed a longstanding high reputation in the old German movement but also today enjoys the confidence of many active "illegals":

"One year after the collapse the remnants of the old organizations are very largely annihilated. That does not mean that they have given up their faith or that no more connections exist. But it does mean that the movement and its activities have been reduced to microscopic size.

"The *Communist* movement seemed to be better prepared and on the whole more willing to offer resistance than the rest. They never questioned whether to continue their work. Of course, they had traitors among their ranks and men who willingly and quickly made their

peace with Hitler at least as many as the other movements had, and their illusions as to their own exaggerated significance persisted also under the new conditions.

"For the many tens of thousands who actively worked within the ranks of the Communist movement, the effects of these illusions were as devastating as those of the reformist sluggishness among the Social Democrats. Nothing has remained resembling a coherent movement. The central as well as the district and local headquarters were hunted down by the police time and again.

"The lowest units are the most active ones, the cells and the groups of purely local character, the so-called street-cells. They produce their own material, write it and duplicate it themselves, distribute it themselves and carry it into the houses of their district or to the Labor exchange. More and more they restrict their activities to maintaining contacts only in their closest vicinity. They have had too many bitter experiences. It happens frequently that they are caught—as recently in the Chausseestrasse in Berlin—when surprise raids on the huge working class tenements are made and every single one of all the workers present and their wives and children are questioned and searched by the Police.

"Camouflaged as study circles for foreign languages they continue their theoretical discussions—usually on an extremely low level—they seem to have learnt as little as they forgot. Still, they are the most advanced part of the old Communist movement, who thus try to keep themselves politically alive and to serve the cause. Some are more than critical of the official Comintern line, but under the new conditions it seems no longer so dangerous to be a critical Communist.

"Even more bitterly they all complain of the failure of the central leadership in regard to organizational problems; e.g., in the case of Alfred Kattner, who was to be chief witness for the prosecution in the forthcoming Thaelmann trial, it was found out that he had contacts with one of the illegal central headquarters. Two or three headquarters with whom he maintained contact were liquidated. Even after that he remained in his position until later he was shot.

"His betrayal of Johnny Scheer (the member of one of the central headquarters which were arrested), Steinfurt, and others seriously



undermined the morale—nothing is discussed as much among the illegal Communists as the spy plague; still, they go on with their work.

"There are instances of great heroism and devotion. A funeral of a comrade was attended by many workers. Within hearing of the police the widow said at the grave: 'I know you were not shot in an attempt to escape.' And a worker said: 'You fell for the workers' cause, you shall be revenged.' The police did not intervene—they merely took photos of a number of those present. . . .

"Of the former *Social Democratic* movement it is the youth above all who maintain the contacts. Numerically extremely few are left. In the borough A. of a big town which used to have an organization of several thousand members, there is today a group of eight or nine younger party members. They maintain contact with a similar group in the neighboring borough B. consisting of only three. For protection they have joined one of the tolerated charity organizations to cover their frequent meetings. They are on the outlook for 'illegals' who, they understand, have firmer organizational relationship. Persons who are supposed (rightly or wrongly) to be associated with the 'illegals' are approached for advice and help. They are looking for an experienced instructor who could help them in their study circle and whose political views would be 'left of the former Party.' Without knowing very much what it is all about this group distributes a duplicated broadsheet issued by one of the illegal organizations. This typifies the remnant of a formerly strong party organization, its attitude, the isolation of the individual, but also the chances to reorganize the best elements, few though they may be in numbers.

"In another district C. the regular meetings actually take place in the flat of a formerly well known comrade. Here, too, an organization once counting thousands of members can now assemble in one room. They have many discussions, they are seeking a new way in serious political talks among young people conscious of their responsibility and aware of the possible consequences of their actions: concentration camp, torture, and even death.

"In a third district D. they meet alternatively in several flats. Here they are more careful and therefore count fewer victims from amongst them. But they have also refused to distribute material smuggled in

from abroad: 'They don't know, anyhow, what conditions in Germany are nowadays; their literature is certainly not worth the risk of our heads.' They learnt also from the sad experiences in their neighboring district E. There a badly organized attempt to recommence the work had resulted in many arrests. Among those who were left, there followed depression and dejection, characterized by an atmosphere of mutual suspicion, general anxiety, fear of spies, and distrust of the reliability of the closest friends. You could hear words like: 'The last arrests have shown that you cannot trust even your oldest comrades.' Or, 'It is no use; none of the former comrades will go on doing anything.'

"In the district D. mentioned above, they hold that, today as of old, activities can be increased and strengthened by success. But under present conditions success means above all not to be discovered, to expand as fast as one's own forces can 'digest' and not to try doing things with which one cannot fully cope and which get out of control. They think it vital to give to all comrades as much security as is humanly possible, to avoid senseless sacrifices, and to assure steady progress by careful and successive selection of the best individuals.

"Many of those who with courage and energy joined in some badly organized activities have never recovered from their depression following the arrests of their friends. The mere news that the police got hold of a list of names has led many to a complete break-down in which some lost their nerves so completely that they even, though without malice, betrayed their friends to the *Gestapo*.

"The young ones learn quickest of all. A year ago they merely kept in contact, met for outings or social evenings and went together hiking through the country. In the meanwhile, many of them have learnt more than they could have learnt during many years under normal conditions. Slowly they are acquiring political maturity and organizational skill. They are small in numbers compared to the millions of German youth. *But these few are the core of a new generation which can defeat Fascism . . .*"

That is the picture of the German movement at the beginning of 1934 as it presented itself to one who actively took part in it.

But while the state of the movement did not yet at that time give very much ground for optimism, the general resentment in all classes continued and increased rapidly.

In March the first factory "elections" prescribed in the "Bill For The Regulation Of National Labor," took place. The workers had the choice of either endorsing or rejecting so-called "councils of confidence" proposed by the Nazis for each factory. The "councils of confidence" were an institution for keeping up appearances, as if the workers still possessed something like a representation of their own, such as they had in the shop steward organization which formed part and parcel of the Weimar Republic. However, the workers knew the difference between shop stewards and enforced Nazi "council of confidence" only too well. Many of the Nazi candidates were rejected. Scores of individual reports received from all over the Reich prove conclusively that the election figures published later by the Nazi press had been simply and crudely falsified from A to Z.

Nor was the Nazi demonstration on May 1 any more successful. A totalitarian regime can on any occasion assemble some ten thousand men and women to march through the streets. What counts is whether there are any signs of genuine enthusiasm or not. On May 1, 1934, that enthusiasm was decidedly lacking. The processions were everywhere big enough to impress any superficial observer. The well-known German skill at organizing impressive demonstrations once more celebrated its triumph. But the usual songs were missing; on arrival at the meeting places, people started to eat their sandwiches, went to sleep or tried to escape as quickly as possible, seeking a way through or around those gates into which they had been penned like cattle. The workers of many factories had not turned up at all despite threats of reprisals, others had escaped on their way.

In addition, the illegal activities had by then to some extent caught up, although they never mobilized more than an extremely small percentage of the disgruntled population. Still, for May 1, a large number of illegal leaflets were prepared and rather widely distributed.

The distributing agents sometimes discovered ingenious methods: A motor cyclist drove at terrific speed through some of the main streets "losing" a packet of handbills on his way which were caught by the eager crowd. When the police arrived he had long disappeared. In one of the big chemical plants packets of such leaflets were somehow placed before the huge ventilators. When they were turned on in the morning they scattered the leaflets all over the workshop. The managers could not possibly hope to discover those responsible. One

of these attempts during the summer 1934 had a rather amusing sequel. One of the "illegals" managed to throw a huge bundle of leaflets down from the roof of the big department store *Karstadt* in Berlin. The man succeeded in getting back unnoticed into the store and in mingling with the crowd where nobody could find them. The actual rain of leaflets on the big *Hermannplatz* was noticed by so many thousands of onlookers and caused so much excitement that Goering had the truly ingenious idea of inventing some mysterious "foreign airplanes" which had mischievously dropped propaganda material to undermine the morale of the German people.

Most of this material was produced inside Germany by often the most primitive means. There were also scores of pamphlets and journals printed abroad for distribution inside Germany. They were printed on very thin paper in very small type and provided with a cover designed to fool the police. However, even such neutral titles as "How to grow tulips," "The art of self-shaving," or "Ten useful exercises for your helath," etc. did not usually succeed in cheating the police, for why should anyone bother to bring over the German frontiers hundreds of such advertising booklets? That was enough to arouse suspicion. Therefore much of this kind of illegal literature never arrived at its destination.

During these summer months of 1934 numerous and often comparatively large groups of people joined for the first time the small army of clandestine workers. Without having given up their beliefs they had still waited passively until the general wave of discontent revived their hopes and consequently their energies. Most of them during the past year had lost all the contacts they formerly possessed, their colleagues and comrades having been either arrested or become uncertain. So they tried to take up contacts with the various political centers abroad which had in the meantime been formed. Scores of new programs for the German revolution were drafted at that time—most of them since forgotten. Their value consisted not so much in their contents as in the fact that they were evidence of the newly awakened initiative and interest.

But whilst these activities and political discussions were visibly increasing, the general unrest under the surface of the Nazi State grew even more rapidly. It grew, until on the 30th of June, 1934, the crisis broke.



Action was taken simultaneously in Berlin and Munich against the principal leaders of the S.A. (Storm Troops). Hitler personally arrested Roehm, Heines and two group leaders in a country house near Munich and had them shot without trial, while in Berlin the action was directed by General Goering. Among his victims were General Kurt von Schleicher and his wife, who were killed in their flat, and Gregor Strasser (one of the founders of the Nazi party). The official explanation of the purge was that the S.A. leaders had been conspiring to bring about the "second Revolution" with the support of a foreign power and that Schleicher and other reactionaries had been linked up with them. Only after several weeks had elapsed the German press was allowed to publish an official list of 77 victims. According to unofficial but most careful estimates the number of victims exceeded one thousand.

The killing of the former prime minister General von Schleicher, of the Storm Troop leader Roehm, and of scores of other Nazi leaders in highest positions aroused not only disgust in Germany and abroad, but also provoked much fantastic speculation and sensational prophecy that now the beginning of the end had definitely come.

It is perhaps not surprising that most of the international press misjudged the German development so thoroughly. But one might have thought that the anti-Fascist political organizations would have known better, being almost exclusively occupied with a detailed observation of conditions in Germany. With the exception of those few who from the beginning had emphasized the need for a truly critical analysis and a realistic approach free from damaging illusions, they were all as thoroughly misled as the foreign journalists.

The illegal central organ of the Social Democratic Party, printed abroad and smuggled into Germany, published after June 30 an article headed "Suicide of the dictatorship," in which they maintained: "There can be no doubt that the shots in Munich and Berlin introduce the self-destruction of the dictatorship." (*Sozialistische Aktion*, July 12, 1937—original italics.) The next issue of the same paper contained this sentence: "*The 30th of June is the beginning of the end of National Socialism.*" (July 29, 1934—original italics.)

For once, Socialists and Communists agreed completely. The official organ of the Comintern, the German edition of the *Inprekorr*

writes about the Roehm purge: "June 30th is the beginning of the end of the Fascist dictatorship in its National Socialist form," or: "The crisis which broke on June 30th is only another side of the revolutionary upsurge of the working class." (*Rundschau*, No. 30, July 5, 1934.)

Unanimity on this question was reached by practically all German anti-Fascist organizations. There were only very few voices advocating a more realistic estimation of the bloody events and their consequences; they were shouted down as pessimists and defeatists.

Yet, these so-called pessimists turned out to be only more realistic than the rest. The events of June 30, far from being the beginning of the end, were an acute stage of the growing pains of German Fascism. They were not evidence of its decay, but of its overcoming of the initial difficulties which were still barring the way to the truly totalitarian state. After the working class organizations had been defeated and annihilated, after the liberal and conservative organizations had been brought into line and incorporated in the Fascist system, there remained one final blow to be dealt to all those ambitious and—actually or potentially—hostile people who might try successfully to challenge Hitler's leadership in times of acute difficulties. Roehm and Schleicher were both such personalities, different as their backgrounds and their aims were. With their removal the way for Hitler's unchallenged rule was paved—until more serious universal crises shake the foundation of the regime.

## 5. The Development of Underground Work

### (II)

*Summer, 1934, till Spring, 1936*

THE two years following the killings of June 30 were characterized by two main features which on the surface seemed to contradict each other. One was the series of spectacular victories of Hitler's foreign policy; the other was the first symptoms of a revived class struggle.

The immediate consequence of the Roehm purge was a strengthening of the totalitarian character of the dictatorship. At the same

time it suffered a considerable decrease of its mass support. The cooling off of the mass support was even visible in the so-called Hindenburg elections of August 19, which made Hitler President in addition to his already assumed title of "Leader and Chancellor of the German Reich." The election showed almost twice as many anti-Hitler votes as in November, 1933. This is not without some significance although Fascist elections have usually little value as a barometer of the true feelings of the people.

Throughout the winter, discontent continued, a discontent which from that time onwards was never to disappear entirely, and of which time and again Goebels and his underlings in the Ministry of Propaganda were forced to take notice in their furious tirades against the "grumblers and grouseers."

Economic difficulties and hardships for the workers were steadily increasing. Nevertheless the interest of the entire population was more and more directed towards a purely political problem:—the fight for the Saar Basin. Among sane people there was never any doubt as to the result of the Saar plebiscite. But many of the opposition, many of the "illegals" had pinned their hopes to at least a big minority of anti-Hitler votes which would certainly have undermined the moral prestige of the Nazi government. The 90% pro-German election result came rather as a shock to those who had once more allowed themselves to be guided by illusions. The German people received the results of the elections with an enormous enthusiasm. But that enthusiasm was child's play compared to the hectic frenzy which broke out after the introduction of general conscription by the Law of March 16, 1935. Reports received from all over the Reich agree that the general feeling was like that after a long delayed but finally glorious victory.

Enormous as the enthusiasm was on both occasions, it had no lasting after-effects. Neither the return of the Saar nor even the general conscription changed anything in the everyday life of the majority of the German people. And in the long run everyday experiences count for considerably more than single outstanding events. It is true that the lives of the German youths, who had now to do two and a half years' service before getting into any proper job, were obviously affected. But then, they were merely the generation to come and not the generation which represented the average German citizen.

Whilst the spirit of German militarism thus celebrated its long-awaited resurrection, a new and highly significant development had begun under the surface. More and more distinct did the impression grow that the period of retreat of the German working class was definitely concluded and that the harbingers of a newly awakened class consciousness were heralding the first cracks in the rigidity of the Fascist order.

Characteristic of that revival was the spontaneous wish for new contacts and organizations arising among the workers of all districts and in all branches of industry. The small circles of former trade union or shop steward fellow-workers which had continued some form of existence in the workshops, became again active in ridding themselves of their enforced isolation and in making contacts with similar groups in other districts or factories. In contrast to the political groups described above, the active part of this new opposition movement was not the youth, but chiefly the highly skilled workers between thirty and fifty who had formerly been the militant nucleus of the free trade Unions. They were that stratum of the working class which had had the most thorough political and industrial training during the republican era of the Reich, and many of them had even taken an active part in the movement under the difficult conditions of the great war. In hundreds of variations they tried to find ways and means for new forms of organizations. They founded burial-clubs (tolerated by such employers as were annoyed with the Nazis for one reason or another). They founded technical journals, "to promote a higher standard of skilled labor." They went and visited old colleagues with whom they had lost touch, talking again of old times, exchanging information on labor conditions in various industries, on the reactions of workers to wage cuts, longer hours, and the general deterioration of their standard of living. Although the various psychological factors responsible for this rise of activity are hardly measurable, it should be mentioned that the revival was expressed among other symptoms by a slow recovery of self-respect which was of no small consequence. Gradually some of the feeling came back that only they themselves—and nobody else—could defend their own interests.

At that time the clandestine work of the political groups was somewhat thrown into the shade by the illegal trade union work, as it has been called. This does not mean that the political groups



did not take part in it. As a matter of fact, some of them were very quick in sensing the new chances, on the development of which they concentrated most of their energy. In addition special trade union groups grew up at that time, mostly led by former shop stewards or the lower and medium full-time officials of the old free trade unions, who had gone back into the workshop. Their activity consisted largely of organizing clandestine groups of "factory-reporters" who exchanged regular information on everything concerning their lives and their work. A visible sign of the newly aroused labor opposition was the factory-elections in April, 1935. The result was even much worse for the regime than that of the corresponding elections in March, 1934. (As a consequence of the unsatisfactory results these factory elections—which, according to the Nazi "Bill For The Regulation Of National Labor" should take place every year—were hereafter suppressed.) Another symptom of the newly organized activities was a decree by the German Labor front issued in May, 1935, which says that reports on factories, being the exclusive privilege of Labor Front officials, are strictly prohibited to all ordinary workers.

It may sound somewhat curious that workers with more than three generations' experience and training in organization should be making such primitive attempts at re-organization as the founding of burial-clubs and the like. Primitive as they may be, these attempts at organization were the first significant signal after the catastrophe of 1933.

From the first day of Hitler's rule onwards, even during the phases of his highest triumphs, there was no lack of resentment and hostility towards the Nazi regime. It was only the belief, that the discontented and hostile masses could *themselves* do something in order to overthrow Fascism, that was remarkably lacking. They used to spend many hours in heated discussion, everyone trying to defend his own thesis against the other's argument: "Hitler can only be overthrown by a lost war."—"One day the army will chase away the Nazis and erect a military dictatorship."—"Hitler will fall as a consequence of the speedily approaching economic collapse. You can see how our country is rapidly falling into absolute and incurable chaos."—"Goering will try to become the supreme leader himself, in the end they will all murder each other, then the system will break down." This collection of opinions gives a fair idea of what the anti-Fascists

were (and many of them still are) hoping for. The significant change, which took place in the beginning of 1935, consisted in the abandonment by the grumbling onlooker of his essentially passive attitude in favor of active attempts at re-forging the only weapon of the working class: its organization.

Hardly visible as were their results, the energy and enthusiasm put into these new activities were almost incredible. I remember particularly well the description which a metal worker from the Ruhr district gave me of his work in the early summer of 1935. He was still fairly young, thirty-two years old; in the past he had been an active organizer of the Metal Workers' Union in his district. After the breakdown of the movement he retired completely into private life. He felt that everything was finished, that it was no good running into danger for senseless and futile activities. Not for a moment had his hatred of the Nazis died down, but he refused to do anything. He purposely broke off all contact with his former friends or colleagues. Being a highly-skilled worker, he succeeded in finding another job in one of the neighboring towns of the thickly populated Ruhr district. When I asked him why he wanted to leave his town, he replied: "You see, I felt ashamed, ashamed of myself, of my colleagues, of the movement. Just couldn't stand it, meeting them daily in the workshop, in the street, in all the old places. I simply couldn't stand being daily reminded of our humiliation. So I moved, hoping to forget more easily among new faces. . . ." For almost two years this man tried to forget. Then he too, was affected by the general movement described above. One day he aroused himself from his apathetic antagonism towards the world and towards himself. I forget which incident it was that had roused him first. It is of no consequence, anyhow. What is important is that he found new hope and that, with hope, his initiative came back. From that day onwards he started to look for contacts. At first, he did not know what he desired from these contacts. He only felt he had to break his isolation. Sunday after Sunday, he took out his bicycle and went into the neighboring towns to look up his old friends, his former colleagues and comrades. At first, he just talked to them, exchanging experiences and information of general interest. Then he found two or three old-timers who, like himself, wanted to *do* something. They agreed that the most important thing was first to get an idea of what was going on elsewhere. Did

other people feel as they did? Were conditions the same everywhere? Maybe there were other people already doing something. Perhaps, they could combine forces. . . . Thus, slowly, these visits changed from friendly talks into organized meetings. They drew up lists of the "old guard" people who would have remained true to their old principles; they drew up lists of important towns, industrial plants, and mines in the neighborhood. How could they get into contact with the factory X? Whom did they know from the old days who was working there? They discussed every individual: Was he trustworthy? What useful friends did he have? What were his special qualifications? And they collected reports from all the workshops and mines where there was somebody they trusted. At a later stage, they issued circulars to their "reporters" advising them how to avoid suspicion, demonstrating what a good report should look like and pointing out the faults in a bad one, teaching them the importance of concrete facts, advising them how to react to wage cuts, how to vote in the factory elections, how to behave on the Nazi May Day celebration. . . .

I cannot describe the serious and modest way in which this man spoke of his own merits in this work, which deeply impressed me when I heard his story. But what he did was no more than what hundreds of others did as well. Without a penny to spare, after their tiring daily work, conscious every minute of the enormous danger involved, these men took on their shoulders a work comparable in certain respects with what the Tolpuddle Martyrs had done a hundred years ago; there is however that one important difference in that the oppressive system of the Fascist State is truly totalitarian; its methods differ as much from those of former reactionary regimes as the methods of warfare at that time differed from a modern war based on the latest mechanical equipment and the most devilish chemical inventions.

Fascism transforms a state into an ultra-modern scientific war machine, not only in its military but also in its civil functions. It is therefore comprehensible that the first inexperienced, and frequently imprudent, attempts at reviving the class struggle in Germany were perhaps bound to fail. They were made at a time when the general stability of the Nazi regime was not in any way shaken. They themselves did not for a moment constitute an immediate political threat to German Fascism. They were the first faint signs of the fact that

Fascism cannot abolish the class struggle, noisily as it may proclaim to have finally established the National Unity of the German people.

Yet, even this first evidence of the re-awakened trade unionist class-consciousness was sufficient to make the Nazis feel very uneasy. The consequence was a new systematic wave of terror which annihilated practically all of those first attempts by a hopeful new movement. Persecution of political suspects has always been part of the daily routine work in Nazi Germany. But the thoroughly planned *Gestapo* action on an enormous scale in the summer and autumn of 1935, designed to destroy systematically all the old and new centers of anti-Fascist activities, went far beyond this.

During more than two years of daily practice the German secret police had reached a standard of efficiency that hardly has even been equalled. Some of its methods have been published by the international press. Here are just a few examples:

(1) A man is caught in an attempt to smuggle illegal literature over the German frontier. The confiscated literature is given to a number of *Gestapo* agents who are former members of some working class organization. They take these papers to their former unsuspecting friends. Sometimes they simply put the paper or pamphlet through the letterbox. Unless the receiver indignantly reports at once to the police he is arrested. In this way, not only sympathizers with the anti-Fascist cause have been hunted down, but also a number of indifferent people who out of sheer laziness neglect to go to the police.

(2) In a town in Southern Germany a second-hand bookshop was opened. Among the cheap books displayed in the window were several copies of Maxim Gorki's revolutionary novel: *The Mother*; a selection of poems by the German Anarchist Erich Muehsam (who had been tortured to death in a Nazi concentration camp), novels by Barbusse and similar literature which does not comply with the Nazi taste. Every customer who asked for one of these books was arrested. The bookshop had been opened by a *Gestapo* agent for the sole purpose of testing the reaction of the people.

(3) The so-called *Blockwarte* (i.e., unpaid Nazi officials in every block of flats) must at regular intervals fill in questionnaires about all the tenants in their charge. These police questionnaires contain, apart



from general remarks, such questions as Former political organization of the tenant? Present organization? Which newspaper has he subscribed to? How often does he receive visitors and what kind of people do they seem to be? Does he get mail or foreign newspapers from abroad? Which? How many evenings of the week does he spend out of his flat? etc., etc. Thus the police receive a systematic collection of records of everybody's doing and relations. If such a record contains anything out of the ordinary, the man or woman in question is watched. Then the telephone is tapped; mail opened and read, and visits and appointments registered. This systematic procedure frequently puts the police on the track of illegal work.

(4) A booklet with many photographic illustrations has been distributed among all members of the police in which a minute description is given of all possible places where people might hide illegal literature. This "guide for house-searches" is completed and revised at frequent intervals in the light of latest discoveries and experiences.

However, that does not mean that the *Gestapo* is bound to be successful in each case, and that all attempts at resistance are doomed to failure even before they have begun. It merely means that the methods of clandestine work must reach the same high standard of efficiency. This is not only theoretically possible, but it has also been successfully achieved by such sections of the underground movement as have made conscious efforts in that direction. Obviously there is no way of ensuring a hundred per cent safety. Even the most carefully organized clandestine work may be found out by the police. However there is a very wide margin between the inevitable losses suffered without exception by all "illegals" and the irresponsible thoughtlessness, practised by some, which needlessly sacrificed thousands of the most courageous workers.

The systematic terror of the year 1935, however, not only hit the deficiently organized activities. Literally, not a single organization and not a single geographical district proved immune from these wholesale persecutions. The mass trials in all industrial centers, the complete annihilation of a number of illegal groups, the heavy losses sustained by all of them are a result of that systematic police action. It can be compared only with the atrocities committed during the first months of 1933. But there is one highly significant difference:

In 1933, the regime was concerned with annihilating the last remnants of the defeated German labor movement. *The wave of terror in 1935 was the expression of the struggle against new centers of working class resistance which had formed themselves afresh on account of the new conditions.*

The set-back to the movement caused by these large scale prosecutions was terrific. The intimidation of even those who had been spared was for some time almost absolute. The after-effects were felt throughout the winter. The trials of people arrested in mid-summer, 1935, often took place as late as spring, 1936. The trials were usually a second shock to friends still at liberty. Often they learnt only then how much the police knew. Some of that knowledge was gained as the result of deficient organization; some was the result of spy-work; some was extorted from the prisoners either by ruse or inhuman ill-treatment. And the "illegals" appreciated also that the methods of the old Czarist police still held good for the German *Gestapo*: one or two of the already spotted "illegals" are left at liberty so that, unaware of being watched, they lead the police to the rest of the organization.

There remains to be mentioned one significant occurrence during this period which, though without immediate results, had an important bearing on the later development. This event was the change of the line of the Communist Party, foreshadowed in the late summer days of 1934 and later officially announced at the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern in August, 1935. The first practical expression of that change of line was the co-operation of Socialists and Communists in the Saar struggle.

Inside Germany the reactions to the new policy were not unanimous. Most of the active Socialists warmly welcomed the Communist turn to the united front. Others kept a cool reserve—wondering whether the conversion was really honest and not merely another tactical move, conceived after the theory of Social Fascism had obviously failed to win the Social Democratic workers for the Communist Party. Most of the underground Communists were greatly relieved and enthusiastic when they heard of the official change. In fact, many of them had already abandoned the old sectarian line which was in such striking contrast to the facts and therefore utterly unsuited to

guide the anti-Fascist activities successfully. But there were also a number of Communists who for the past seven years had been so thoroughly trained in the abuse of all other working class sections and in the contempt for democratic rights and liberties that even Fascist reality did not succeed in shaking their original outlook. Their reaction to the new policy was one of complete bewilderment. Some of them even doubted whether the new United and Popular Front policy had really been sanctioned by the Comintern. They were afraid of having fallen into the hands of some opposition group which falsely claimed authority. However, this type of Communist remained in a comparatively small minority; by now, even these may have overcome their confusion and adapted themselves to the changes that have taken place. In this connection it should also be realized that information on the new policy reached the illegal movement only slowly and by degrees in the way of everything else that the dictatorship wants to suppress. But however great the vigilance of the *Gestapo* and however clever its methods, nothing of importance has happened inside or outside Germany which has not sooner or later reached the eyes and ears of those who really want to know.

Together with the United Front policy came the so-called "Trojan Horse" tactics, which means, according to official Communist interpretations, that "work within all the Fascist mass organizations must become the chief method of our work." (Florin in his speech at the Seventh World Congress on the "Task of the C.P.G. in the Organization of the United Front." *The Communist International*, German Edition, No. 17-18, September 20, 1935.)

These Trojan Horse tactics were based on the fact that the illegal anti-Fascist work remained far behind the spontaneous opposition of the workers, and could not even hope to catch up with the organization of the discontented masses against the Fascist regime. Insisting that even under Fascist conditions mass-activities were both vital and possible, the Communists argued that these mass activities could be carried on, provided that every legal and semi-legal opportunity was seized. The idea of using all legal chances had long been agreed upon by all anti-Fascists. A sharp controversy arose at the point when it came to the practical interpretation of this formula.

The Communists maintained that the actual Fascist mass or-

ganizations, in particular the German Labor Front and the S.A. (Storm Troops), were the fortresses into which they had to smuggle their Trojan Horse. Nobody denied that resentment was widespread in both organizations; in the S.A., because the expected "second revolution" had never come and because the strict order of the Fascist regime was not exactly to the taste of mercenaries, recruited as a civil war army; in the Labor Front, because of its compulsory character, which made it virtually impossible for any worker to stay outside it.

Much opposition arose among all those active in the underground movement when the Communist Party Executive appealed to them to strive for posts within the Fascist organizations, and then to use their newly acquired positions for the defense of working class interest. The most concrete expression of this policy was given on the occasion of the Factory "elections" when the Communist slogan was to put forward as many anti-Fascist candidates as possible. Then all anti-Fascist candidates were to be endorsed by the workers, and all genuine Nazis struck off the list. This actually took place in a number of workshops. It often happened that employers chose for their lists of candidates former shop stewards and trade unionists who enjoyed the confidence of the workers. If they were elected the employer could proudly present the Labor Front with a favorable election result.

As was foreseen by many, these "Councils of Confidence" turned out to be mere tools in the hands of the employer or else of the Nazi Labor Front supervisors. Whatever a candidate's own secret intentions may have been, as a member of such a council or as a Labor Front official he became objectively a representative of the Fascist regime and was completely unable to do anything that was not wanted, or at least tolerated, by the Nazis. If any individual dared to take his new position seriously, if he tried in any way to improve labor conditions or to prevent their deterioration, he was warned that this was no part of his work—if he was lucky. In many cases such men have been dismissed without notice and frequently even arrested. A worker cannot read the mind of his fellow. He cannot look into his neighbor's heart and understand the other's motives. Fascism binds the tongue of the opposition. The mere fact that an old-timer ac-



cepted a post in the Labor Front, joined the S.A., or became a voluntary candidate on the list for the sham-representation of the workers was usually enough to discredit that particular man in their eyes. The Labor Front and the S.A. are Fascist organizations, which means that they are organs of conscious enslavement and oppression. As such they are regarded by the opposition; as such they are hated and despised.

Most of the illegal workers therefore rejected this kind of Trojan Horse tactics. They knew, or rather felt instinctively that Fascist organizations could never be transformed into organs of the class struggle, and that respected and trusted members of the old movement who acted on behalf of these organizations, would merely support the pretence and the demagogy of the Nazis and would generally be regarded as traitors.

Discussions over this problem have continued ever since the Trojan Horse policy was advocated by the Communists. They went on even amidst the persecutions described above. As far as the factory elections were concerned the Nazi Government solved the problem in its own way, for in 1936 the factory elections were not allowed to take place. They were postponed until 1937. (In 1937 they were again postponed, which probably means that they have been abolished for good.) But the blows dealt to the illegal movement during the year 1935 undid many of the positive effects which the new line would otherwise have had on the clandestine work.

In the spring of 1936, on top of the general depression among the "illegals" came another of Hitler's spectacular successes in foreign policy:—the march into the Rhineland. In contrast to the general conscription introduced in the previous year, which had been expected, the military occupation of the Rhineland on March 7, 1936, came as a complete surprise to the German people. Their first reaction was fear—surely the other powers would not idly look on . . . Surely France would declare war . . . They waited—and when nothing came but diplomatic protests, their fears changed suddenly into enthusiastic triumph. At that time the overwhelming majority of the German people felt nothing but admiration for "the great leader who by his fearless determination had at last restored Germany's honor and freedom."

That was the lowest point ever reached by the anti-Fascist opposition.

## 6. The Development of Underground Work

### (III)

*Spring, 1936, till Winter, 1937*

IN APRIL, so-called general elections were arranged to provide a demonstration of national solidarity with the policy of the Fuehrer. There can be no doubt that in these elections Hitler's policy was voluntarily endorsed by many who otherwise regarded themselves as conscious anti-Nazis. "Why should we not occupy the Rhineland? After all, it is our own country."—"In this case Hitler is right. Why did the republic never show as much stamina?" Such were the feelings widely spread and frequently expressed among the working class, too.

Such an attitude to this and similar issues on the one hand, and the failure of resistance to enslavement and the steadily deteriorating material situation on the other, caused many observers to conclude that the working class had become the main buttress of the Nazi rule while the middle classes, who had expressed their discontent much more freely, were the true anti-Fascist forces.

The steady recovery of working class opposition throughout the years 1936-37 proves that the contrary is true. But even signs of apparent apathy and resignation do not mean that the working class has made its peace with Fascism. Through their long political and organizational experience the workers have developed a very outspoken sense of realism which has never left them. They feel that under Fascism there is no chance to form proletarian mass organizations which in the past always had been and in the future always will be their real strength. Unorganized they feel helpless, and it is this feeling of impotence which is often mistaken for apathy. The worker who for ten, fifteen, or twenty years had taken an active part in building up his own organizations would not merely regard them as a useful means of protecting his and his fellow-workers' interests. The strength and indeed the very existence of these organizations was the main source of his pride and his self-respect. It is, therefore,

only too natural that the workers should have been far less inclined to console themselves with the endless and futile grumbling which was at all times so typical of the petit-bourgeois.

One of the first signs of the new recovery of the anti-Fascist spirit was the funeral of the Socialist Clara Bohm-Schuch in the spring of 1936. Careful estimates state that about ten thousand men and women joined in the funeral procession. Even the Nazis were hardly in a position to interfere. Yet, it was obvious to all those who attended or watched that the procession was more than mere homage paid to an old comrade and friend—it was an anti-Fascist mass demonstration in the true sense of the word.

Such occasions on which real feelings can be expressed without grave risks are very rare. But these rare moments were by no means the only symptoms of the revived anti-Fascist activities. As early as mid-summer of 1936 the depression described in the previous chapter had been overcome. Another phase of revived activities had started, distinguished by the display of a greater sense of realism and a better adaptation to the changed circumstances than the work had ever shown before. Mass-resistance, as described here and there by wishful propagandists, it neither was nor is. But it is fairly safe to say that the after-effects of the defeat in 1933 and the shock from the wholesale persecutions of 1935 have been definitely overcome. The same type of worker who in 1935 took the initiative in the workshops, the same youths who immediately after the collapse assumed responsibility and kept together what had been left of the old organizations, this nucleus of the new movement again began to become active. They had recovered their self-confidence, they were regaining their class-consciousness.

This recovery was due to several factors. The first and most decisive one was the social and material deterioration of the life of the working class. The standard of living had continuously gone down. The frequent shortage of all kinds of vital foodstuffs, the almost exclusive use of available raw materials for either rearmaments or export-dumping affected the every-day life of each individual. The war preparation, the accelerated speed of armaments production, the cynical speeches of the Nazi leaders emphasizing that guns were more important than butter, the increasingly aggressive tone in foreign

policy (particularly the campaign against Czechoslovakia) produced a general atmosphere of nervousness and apprehension such as never existed before.

This was also the period of the first successful effort on the part of the international working class movement to resist Fascism. In a previous chapter I mentioned that the rising of the Austrian workers in February, 1934, had already been a source of encouragement for the German anti-Fascist movement. The heroic defense of the Spanish workers and peasants affected the German movement in a similar way, except that it meant for them infinitely more. The enthusiasm of the anti-Fascist German workers for the cause of Spanish freedom was enormous. A number of the most active men achieved this time what they had tried in vain to do during the Austrian rising—they went to Spain and joined the International Brigades. There were few of these, of course; and there could not have been many in view of the enormous difficulties in getting from Germany to Republican Spain, without a penny to spare and frequently without a passport. I know of others who over a week-end crossed the Swiss or Czech frontier, sent out by their comrades for the sole purpose of getting correct information on the progress of the war. Many reports from districts all over the Reich tell of numerous collections arranged in factories to raise solidarity funds for Spain. These collections had in some cases astonishing financial results quite apart from their significance as such under the present conditions in Germany.

However vital the encouragement through the Spanish defense was and is, the decisive stimulus for the new activities was not in the first place derived from international developments but from the *difficulties and dangers within Germany herself*. Almost more strongly than to the Spanish events did the German workers react to the insolence of Herr Ley, leader of the German Labor Front, who in the autumn of 1936, claimed to have figured out that German workers could make a very decent living on 11.80 marks per week. These "Eleven marks-and-eighty-pfennig" remained for a long time the chief topic in discussions among workers, and the object of countless bitter jokes.

Perhaps even more significant is the more efficient and consistent character gradually adopted by the organized clandestine activities during this period. Since the first signs of revival in the summer of



1936 until this moment the illegal anti-Fascist movement in Germany has made slow but comparatively steady progress. This progress is expressed in many ways. Perhaps the most significant phenomenon is that in the consciousness of the active "illegals" the traditional split has become a thing of the past. Their experiences and their sufferings proved in the long run a common bond, close enough to outweigh all traditional antagonism. This does not mean, of course, that differences of opinion have ceased to exist. I mentioned previously the Trojan Horse tactics as one of those important differences. There are others, too. But except for the problems of the method of organization they are, for the time being, of an almost entirely theoretical character. They concern, for example, the problems of a popular front against German Fascism. They concern prospects of the German anti-Fascist revolution. They concern questions of the ultimate goal of that revolution. This does not mean that these problems and the variety of possible solutions suggested are of minor significance. They certainly are not. But they have not as yet any direct bearing on the daily activity of the clandestine groups. Only in rare cases are the "illegals" faced with the necessity of making political decisions in the true sense of the word. Normally, they have not the choice between two lines of policy since Fascism prevents them from actively pursuing any one policy. As everyone with only the slightest notion of the history of the German labor movement will be able to imagine, the existing differences of opinion have little in common with the fratricidal antagonism of the past. The aim, at least the immediate aim is simple and clear—to overthrow Fascism, and the one and only task is to prepare for this revolution.

Another symptom of the progress made by the illegal movement is the improvement of its methods of organization. It is true, the standard reached is still far from being perfect; nor is it equal in all groups. But to some extent all organizations have made headway. This finds its expression, above all, in the development of a higher technique of communications between the various local groups and between the German centers and the center abroad. (It goes without saying that details of this technique are not suitable for publication.) It is further expressed by a stricter application of more carefully considered principles in selecting the individual collaborators. It is ex-

pressed by the refusal, by now common to all organizations, to distribute, to all and sundry, masses of literature smuggled in from abroad—a policy which has proved to be so suicidal that the possible good effects could never outweigh the inevitable loss of countless valuable and irreplaceable members. In other words, it is expressed in a better protection of the individual comrades as well as of the organizations as a whole, ensuring the vital continuity of the anti-Fascist work as far as that is humanly possible.

Finally, but not least in importance, there is a definite improvement in the political qualification of the active cadres of the movement. This again does not apply to all organizations in an equal measure. But it is certainly true for many individuals, particularly for many of the younger ones. Young fellows who in 1933 were in no way outstanding figures, but active and intelligent rank and file members of the Socialist or Communist youth movements, have grown into responsible leaders of first quality. Five years of Fascist oppression have been a unique school both for character and ability, developing all the qualities which distinguish a true leader—courage without foolhardiness, independence of judgment, consciousness of responsibility, the power to face up to reality, energy, and initiative. There are not many who have acquired all these qualities. The enforced isolation of the individual and the fact that all normal sources of objective information have dried up, are bound to lower the general intellectual level of the nation. Visitors to Germany, who knew her in the days of the Weimar republic, will be struck by the devastating effect of Nazi rule in this respect, as in all others. Therefore the moral and intellectual maturity of so many of the illegal fighters is all the more striking. It has grown solely on their belief, unshaken and unshakable by any amount of oppression and terror, that eventually their cause must be victorious. This belief and their own knowledge of doing what they consider their duty is their only compensation. Their enforced anonymity robs them even of the recognition and acknowledgment with which, in a democratic movement, such devotion is generally rewarded.

They have now learned ways of obtaining information on what is happening inside and outside Germany. Obviously, the wireless and the foreign press, which gets into the country, play a big part. They

have found out that much can also be learned from a regular and comparative study of the frequently self-contradictory Nazi publications. On the occasions when they cross the frontiers for meetings with their friends abroad, there is, as a rule, an astonishingly small amount of news to tell them which they have not already found out for themselves. They do not come for information in the first place; they come for discussion of their own immediate problems as well as of those general ones confronting the international working class movement as a whole.

They are not many, but they are to be found everywhere. Their background varies. Some used to belong to the old Socialist movement, some to the Communists, others to small splinter groups, and yet others to trade unions only. In the past, they may have belonged to the extreme right or to the extreme left. All these divisions have lost their significance. Although the same individuals, they are no longer the shattered remnants of defeated organizations; they are the pioneers—the active nucleus of a new movement.

## 7. Problems and Prospects

THE slow but steady advance of the clandestine German movement since the summer of 1936 should not, however, create the illusion that henceforth serious setbacks need no longer be expected. Any day another big terror drive may destroy much of what has been slowly built up during the last period. Nobody could be more aware of that danger than the "illegals" themselves. Fascism can arrest and kill individuals. It can even wipe out whole organization. *But it cannot conquer the social forces* which are the constant and inexhaustible source of strength to the illegal movement.

The careful analysis of such social forces as are created by Fascism against itself, or continue to be effective under its rule, must be one of the main tasks of the anti-Fascist camp. The history of Fascist Italy, the history of Nazi Germany have proved that even decades of Socialist education and mass tradition do not ensure immunity from victorious Fascist influence and propaganda. Those who rely exclusively on the revolutionary spontaneity of the working masses in all circumstances will be satisfied with "enlightening" and "unmask-

ing" and with setting examples of heroism. Five years of anti-Fascist struggle in Germany and sixteen years of anti-Fascist struggle in Italy should be conclusive evidence that the tradition of working class Socialism cannot be regarded either as permanent or guaranteed.

Yet there is a force in every capitalist society which the most brutal oppression cannot destroy, namely the tendency of the workers to strive for an independent organized representation against the power of capital, a tendency based upon their common interest and, therefore, on the solidarity of their class. This force is produced by capitalism itself and will not disappear as long as capitalism lasts. The tendency towards class representation and towards an organized class struggle is frustrated by all ruling classes, but Fascism oppresses it completely. (Compulsory organizations like the German Labor Front merely suggest a legal class organization and serve in reality, to prevent its formation.)

But the very fact that Fascism oppresses the trade unionist tendencies of the working class renders these tendencies political. While the new trade unionism in America, for example, meets with the fierce resistance of the industrial magnates, their economic class opponents, the same tendencies meet in Germany with persecution by the state. *The denial of the right to combine transforms all practical attempts at combination into a political fight for liberty.* This remains true even if the German workers are not conscious of the political character of secret agreements on the speed of production, on camouflaged passive resistance to some of the many petty chicaneries, or on "sleeping strikes" against compulsory Fascist meetings. (For workers to fall asleep in a meeting which they were forced to attend has proved a very successful common protest against which the Nazis are powerless.)

Nobody can today foretell when the opportunity for the German anti-Fascist revolution will come or what character that opportunity will assume. It may be a crisis arising out of a lost or long drawn-out war, out of a sudden and deep economic slump, or out of a devastating inflation. Or else it may arise out of entirely different circumstances which, even as possibilities, are not yet discernible. It is therefore futile to speculate on the particular grievances which may eventually provoke the German people to rise against their oppres-



sors. Only one thing is certain—the working class will have to develop its independent organization in order to use this opportunity and to guide general resentment into the proper channel; this can only be done by those who produce the bread, and not by the churches, nor by the army, nor by middle-class opposition.

The bourgeois revolutions in the past have shown that even then the bourgeois class did not begin its own fight until the “fourth estate,” the workers, rioted. But today the bourgeois class is much more tied to Fascism than it ever was to Absolutism. Its fear of provoking a militant working class movement by its own opposition to the Fascist regime has become infinitely stronger since the victory of the Russian revolution. The army may have conflicts with the Nazi Party, so has the industrialist, so has everybody who does not form part of the state machine as such. Yet, they will never challenge the reign of Fascism as long as it succeeds in oppressing the rebellious class forces of the workers. The German working class will, no doubt, have to look for allies in its fight against Fascism among the peasants and the middle-classes. But it will never receive its freedom as a gift from other classes or outside powers. “The emancipation of the working class must be the task of the working class itself.”

However, the experiences of the German labor movement during the years 1918 to 1923 are striking evidence that great opportunities can pass by. Whether or not a future German revolution can be spared a repetition of 1918 will depend on the conscious preparation made today. Here lies the significance of the illegal work. The illegal organizations are faced with the two-fold task, (1) to co-ordinate the still independent work of the numerous groups as well as the spontaneous labor resistance where it arises; and (2) to develop a determined and capable leadership which through this work of co-ordination will win the confidence of the anti-Fascist workers.

Despite its inevitable limitations, despite slow progress, frequent set-backs, and the failure to achieve spectacular results, it is the illegal anti-Fascist movement which will decide the fate of the Germany of tomorrow.

## “NEWS FROM NOWHERE —”

*The League receives several times each month special reports and letters from various centers in Europe. These reports relate to specific situations in various areas and no one or two of them can be taken as a general picture. The many reports do indicate, however, the basis and foundation on which underground work must be built and the situation to which it must accommodate itself. From voluminous reports each divided into some ten to twenty subdivisions, received since April, two excerpts are printed below. They are sections of reports arbitrarily selected as typical of the material received—though the first quotation concerns a district in which secret opposition is much greater than in most areas. For obvious reasons the names of districts have been omitted.*

### FROM A REPORT IN EARLY APRIL

#### *After the Invasion of Austria—Before the Elections*

Once again the German people are subjected to a propaganda drive on a huge scale. The Nazis are trying to substitute enthusiasm for the fear of war which for some days was especially deeply felt among the people. It is a fact that the first period following the latest coup has found some echo among the Germans as it remained without any visible serious consequences. They are glad that things went as they did and therefore they approve somewhat belatedly the “bold act of the Leader.” The regime is taking the fullest advantage of these feelings. Hence the suddenness of Hitler’s departure from Vienna, of his summoning of the Reichstag and of the arrangement for new elections.

The coup d’etat tactics which Hitler is employing demands the complete secrecy in all his preparations at home as well as abroad. The effect of surprise is however already half the victory in this world of ours shaken as it is by a sense of insecurity and fear of war. But the nearer we approach the actual outbreak of war, the greater the risk of another surprise action becomes, all the more outspoken becomes another phenomenon which is linked up with Hitler’s “lightening policy,” i.e., panic. Such a panic among the people may prove extremely dangerous for the regime when the war should actually break out.

In the following we shall give reports from various German districts and provinces which illustrate the above statements.

*In one certain frontier district* a true war psychosis flared suddenly up during the critical days when the local garrison was called up and marching out for frontier fortification. During the days of March 12-18 the troops were stationed in small formations directly at the frontier. Compared with experiences from the time of the occupation of the Rhineland it is striking how very much greater the fear of war was during the recent decisive days. The unrest and uneasiness has moreover, remained much longer after the peaceful conquest and is disappearing much more slowly. Despite the retreat of the troops after March 18th the fear of war has not yet disappeared although many are quickly regaining their equilibrium and are happy that peace should once more have been preserved.

The general feeling is that the recent well-prepared and quick troop movements must be regarded as some kind of test for future complication in the course of the quarrel with Czechoslovakia. The provisional military frontier occupation and the partial test mobilization left deep psychological traces within the population.

*In some industrial parts of Southern Germany* there was not even that passive approval noticeable that existed during the period of the re-occupation of the Rhineland. For some months now this district has been characterized by a feeling of discontent and opposition such as is inconceivable in other parts

of the Reich, especially so in the open form in which the opposition is expressed. We received a number of reports which sound almost incredible to those who do not know the special position of this area. Here are but a few examples:

On March 18th the entire country was ordered to hoist flags to celebrate the victory in Austria. In a big flathouse, occupied by twenty-four (mostly petit-bourgeois) families there was not one single flag. A baker who was requested to put out a flag replied that he did not possess a swastika flag and that it was hardly worth while to buy one for the short time the whole thing was still to last.

During the preparations for the invasion of Austria and their outward expressions like the speeches of Hitler and Schuschnigg, many workers were pinning all their hopes to the speedy outbreak of war. All the secret wishes were directed towards a military defeat which many regarded as a foregone conclusion. (Similar feelings are noticeable in all the districts from which reports reach us.)

A friend reports a scene which he witnessed and which better than any lengthy explanation reveals how deeply engraved in the hearts of the workers is the feeling of their suppression. In the washing place of a mine all the colliers are assembled and wait their turn to get to the washing basin. They form a long queue in the enormous dreary hall and listen to the news from the radio. The large loudspeakers report the march of the German troops into Austria and the non-existence of any attempts to resist. One must have seen these men. No one uttered a word. They all looked thoughtfully down. Then, upon the end of the news the radio was turned off. With an uncanny suddenness the last tone faded out, and then there was silence, a depressing apprehensive silence. There they were, hundreds of them, their backs bent, their heads hanging down, motionless like in a memorial service, a picture of a silent protest and of despair because of betrayed hopes; like a gang of slaves they looked who are torn between despair, hatred, and hope. The news of Hitler's latest victory was in this hall transformed into a message of broken hopes, of a new terrible defeat. The triumphant boast on the radio and the silent workers, their faces serious and worried—that was the illustration of the new German reality.

For the regime this reality is unbearable. Hence its giant efforts to prepare the plebiscite with the most thorough organizational and propagandist skill. A great many reports illustrate the feverish preparations abundantly. Here we shall quote only a few:

In the Casino X Y Z a meeting of all district Nazi officials took place where it was openly said that the result of the plebiscite must be 99% throughout the district at all cost. It was further announced that on the election day every voter would get a picture of Hitler. The voter himself learns of this honor only on the date of the plebiscite itself. Moreover, he will have to pay for the picture. Another announcement of the meeting was the news that the construction of the motor highways would start immediately upon the Anschluss. There need be no fear that time would be lost through the drawing up of plans. The plans for the Austrian motor highways were already completed three months ago.

On March 26th there were propaganda meetings in all the industrial plants. At the same occasion the managers collected money for election funds. On previous occasions such collections taken by the managers had extremely poor results. In order to do better this time the managers were accompanied by SS men when they marched with their collection boxes through the ranks of the assembled workers.

In the course of the election preparations the Nazis remember once again their social propaganda. The German Labour Front summoned a great number of works managers who were told that working conditions in the factories must be improved under all circumstances. The hustling speed, so it was said, was so

great and therefore the number of accidents so enormous that the Labour Front leaders felt embarrassed to be forced to report to their superiors on the position in their district. These facts did not prevent the same Labour Front speaker from pointing to the Four Year Plan in the same breath and from demanding greater sacrifices for the Four Year Plan because of the work for Austria.

The Labour Front and the Party in this area are now becoming less restless on account of the more and more obvious methods of the opposition to guard against denunciation by direct actions of self help. Thus a political Nazi leader who had denounced the workers of a certain factory, was attacked the same night in the street and thoroughly beaten up. The denouncers have therefore become rather reluctant. Cases of rows with the Nazis or even among the Nazis are very often reported.

Amidst all the fast moving events the workers make the best of the radio. They are seeking the remotest stations. Wherever there is a German word being spoken on the air in Germany they will get hold of it and know it. We know of hard-toiling miners who sit until one o'clock in the morning to hear the broadcasts. To the foreigner it may be inconceivable how great the yearning of the German man and woman is to get hold of a single free word. If only the foreign broadcasting stations would recognize the value of their broadcasts this would be a great success for the cause of right and freedom in Germany. News heard in the evenings becomes the spoken newspaper in the mornings.

The feelings of the German people show at present many variations. In no case, however, even now among the most ferocious Nazis, was there anything to be felt like the delirious enthusiasm which the Viennese demonstrated to the world on the day of Hitler's invasion. The war danger is like a nightmare for the whole people. Fear is stronger than any other feeling among the majority. The opposition cherishes secret hopes; the Nazi followers are looking on with mixed feelings. Large sections of the youth are confident of victory. The profiteers of the regime are hoping for further profits. And the leaders continue on the road they once started. Thus Germany is heading for war which will be more disastrous than any previous one in the history of mankind.

#### FROM A REPORT IN LATE JUNE

##### *"Economic Difficulties and Popular Discontent"*

One of the reasons why the Nazi strategy has gone over to serious war preparation is obviously the difficulty that is arising out of the scarcity of raw materials. Production is trying to catch up with the number of workers (according to the last figures, 20 million workers are employed), but the lack of raw materials is causing big difficulties. It is not only in industry but also in agriculture where bad feed has had serious effects which are only aggravated by hoof and mouth disease epidemic. Because of the labor scarcity there have been special measures affecting small artisans, which is a terrible extension of what has been done all along to deprive these little people of their existence by bureaucracy and taxation. The same National Socialism that won millions of lower middle class people by promising to deproletarianize Germany, is now carrying out a brutal program of forcing them into the proletariat, which no previous government would have dared. The recent anti-semitic outbursts are expected to be enough to divert attention from these other unpleasant measures. We shall give some reports below showing how the economic difficulties, the scarcity of food stuffs and the social readjustments have caused discontent.

A reporter wrote us: "Every day in the factories we experience the scarcity of materials. Often repairs on important machines have to be postponed. Orders are delayed. Everything is transferred over to the Berlin plant. As far as food stuffs are concerned, we all know that first there is a limited quantity of one



article, and then of another. In the meanwhile in another place they have an oversupply of the same articles for a while, though later they will have none for weeks. That is what has been happening to the supplies of fresh vegetables in the last days. They have an oversupply of some vegetables in A, which just can't be bought at B. In C you can get lettuce and asparagus. But kohlrabe can only be bought in B or G. Women with large families who have to run all around to get provisions, have found out that it is worked systematically. The workers, at least the ones who are politically interested, realize that this whole market scarcity business is just a symptom of the serious difficulties that Germany is encountering."

Another of our people writes as follows: "The industrial plants are reporting quite openly to the Nazi party that they are having terrible difficulties with their workers. It happens particularly with their failure to complete the prescribed amount of work, and this failure is blamed exclusively on under-nourishment, particularly on the bad bread. The Nazis make the same complaints, as for example in the mines when the opposition workers are holding it up to them that they at least should have a better production record and they would like to have but they just can't make it. It is very seldom now that even a Nazi reports on one of his fellow workers when he complains about the regime or about the speed-up on the job. During the last arrests in the coal mines Nazis actually warned some of the other workers that they ought to pretend to be sick for a few days because they were probably going to be arrested."

In our district the recent arrests did not have the expected intimidating effect. On the contrary the opposition felt that it was even stronger. Some of the trade unionists who had not been taking any part in illegal work have come to our friends with offers of activity. Actually in the A B and C mines the Nazi committee arranged that the men who were arrested should be paid for the time they missed as the arrests had been a mistake of the Gestapo. The management paid the men without making any objections except to request the men to register at the local Arbeitsfront.

In many plants there are disputes among the foremen and lower officials because of the decline in production. The management demands that they force the workers to speed up and they refuse because *the production decline is not due to the workers but to their bad nourishment and the scarcity of materials*. In one plant the foremen went in a body to the administration and refused to put the speed-up system into effect because the workers were only rebelling and demanding supplementary food as they had once before. Then they complained that certain materials, especially replacements for machines were not available, and that they often had to wait days for them, and that that naturally slowed up production. Since these difficulties sometimes cause a lag of 15% in production, the other departments could not be expected to make up the lost time.

On the 16th of May, in a certain coal plant, the machine for sorting coal, got a broken axle. It was a new machine and the axle had only been installed during the Easter holidays. The breakdown was definitely attributed to inferior material, but they couldn't get a new axle and the machine had to stop running for four days. They used a makeshift method in order to try to fill the orders but the other method caused a loss of 7% in the coal.

In all of the mines they complain that there are more and more mysterious scarcities in necessary material. Interruptions in the work are every day occurrences. Often as many as six shifts are disarranged and the workers have to wait around either because there are not enough cars to load with coal or because there are defects in the motors and the parts that have to be replaced haven't come. The Nazi workers committees very often say openly in meetings that the present situation is untenable, as they must work according to the set

production level and production often lags behind as much as 25%.

Every day new courses are introduced and new posters put up telling the workers how to save materials, and they urge the workers to try to bring the production level up to the prescribed amount. The workers can only laugh at all of these efforts and sometimes they write on the placards such statements as "We have cannons, do we need production records?"

There are many accidents in the mines and the workers often have to report sick, either in order to get a little rest from the speed-up or because the doctors say they are simply exhausted from the tempo of the work. Most of the cases of illness show stomach trouble, which is clearly a result of the bad nourishment."

From another district is reported:

In one of the large factories the men were asked to work 56 hours as there was a rush of orders. Despite the prospect of earning more most of the workers were not prepared to take on this extra work, partly because they are embittered at the decrease in the rates of pay, and partly because they have made the experience that what they earn extra is partly set off by the increased deductions. The feeling of bitterness at the moment is chiefly directed against the Austrian workers who are employed in the factory. They are considered to be the cause of the decrease in the rates of pay, and are completely isolated. Similar reports are from other places where large numbers of Austrian workers have been taken on. At the moment the factories are divided into two camps, not only because the Austrians partly do spoil the prices without taking any consideration of the other workers, and also for political reasons. The workers say that there are no doubt many Nazis among these people and it is therefore better to keep them at a distance to be on the safe side.

Apart from the experiences with the Austrian workers, there exists a real crisis atmosphere in the factories despite the present improvement with regard to raw materials and plentiful employment. Every day there are disputes with the masters about wages and treatment, like there were before the conquest of Austria. There is nothing left of the three-quarter enthusiasm which was born as a result of the relief after the danger of war had passed.

In a large aeroplane factory the Werkschar had to be disbanded owing to the unreliability of its members. A new formation has so far not been possible owing to a lack of willingness on the part of the other workers.

In another large factory the attempt to establish a Factory Sports has been given up as the Works Sport Leader remained alone every evening.

Gradually every attempt to remove the tension in the factories by means of social gatherings, i.e., by means of the so-called "Works comradeship" is being met with mistrust and unwillingness on the part of the workers. "If we had decent wages and could buy something decent with the money, we would rather look after ourselves, we will gladly give up the 'presents'—this is the attitude of the majority.

From another district:

"That the enthusiasm of the people for the regime is steadily declining is also seen by the development of the German Work Front. It becomes more and more just a 'Kraft durch Freude' organization. Their supposed function, to look after the workers socially and legally, fades more and more into the background. In the factories the Front is not taken seriously any more. The owners apply to the Chambers of Commerce and groups of experts for information. The employees of the Front do not know anything. One can get the most various and contradictory information from them on the question of tariff agreement and legal questions. More and more officials are being used for the 'Kraft durch Freude' which is becoming an enormous bureaucratic apparatus.

At the beginning there were many voluntary workers who helped for idealistic reasons. Such people are now becoming fewer and fewer, and correspondingly more officials are needed. The Front is no longer able to enter up their subscriptions in their own offices. Up till now cashiers collected the money deducted from the wages by the Workers direction, and then entered the amounts in their central card index system. Now the cashiers bring these cards to the works and ask that the works should enter them and then return the cards. Which means more work for the Factories."

"At the moment there is no increased shortage of food. There is a shortage of onions still. The quality of the bread changes very often, but has in general improved somewhat during the last few weeks. There is no longer such a shortage of fat. Butter can be obtained in rations. There is a certain restriction on pork.

The substitute policy in ready-made clothing increases steadily. The attempt to make the people believe in the quality of the cellulose cotton is not successful. It is particularly bad for underclothes which have to be boiled.

The lack of housing becomes more and more noticeable. The housing plan is quite insufficient. The rents are very high in relation to the incomes."

From an agricultural district:

"The agricultural population of our district is very discontented. The reasons for this are various. Whereas last summer some of the farmers quite liked the Darre Market regulations, because they had less worry about disposing of their produce, the real meaning of this organization is now becoming clear. In all branches of agriculture it is seen that this will be a difficult year. The bureaucratic centralization of the markets with their exaggerated centralism, together with all these officials to whom the farmers are not used, begin to get on the farmers' nerves. In addition the farmers, in this district at least, are very bitter about the form and course of the ground valuation, which has meant increase in taxes. It is also expected that the fodder harvests will be bad. They are very worried as to how they will obtain sufficient fodder. There is strong opposition to the measures against hoof and mouth disease, above all against the slaughter of all the affected cattle, the compensation paid being about 60 per cent of the estimated value. The result in most cases is a drop in the number of cattle, which will affect many districts in the long run. The strongest discontent is aroused by the measures intended to prevent the spread of the disease. In the villages affected all social life is at a standstill. Visits of the farmers to each other are regarded as sabotage and can mean arrest and punishment. The arrests do not help any more than do the warnings of the authorities to the farmers not to make any difficulties. The farmers say what sense is it to lock everything up when the workers go from one village to the other every day. "We had the disease before, it is true, but we were never in such a prison as now" was the remark of one farmer.

One of the regulations in Darres plan for saving the farmers is that the milk is no longer paid for by quantity, but by fat content, and is paid for by the centre that takes it over. The lack of fodder immediately results in a decrease in the fat content, and so the bad weather and agricultural policy of the government are immediately visited on the farmer. The average price of milk is now 8 or 9 pfennig instead of 13 pfennig per litre, whereas the retail price is still 28 pfennig. The farmers want to know who pockets the difference. They give the answer themselves; the hate of the representatives of the government in the village; above all of the Farmer Leader of the place is nearly everywhere. So the villages present quite a different picture to that of the official propaganda. Under the idyllic quiet and untroubled peace, is concealed the increased discontent of a disappointed class which feels it has been cheated.

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